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THE BIBLE UNVEILED

BY

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When I seriously believe a thing, I say so in a few words, leaving the reader to determine what my belief is worth. But I do not choose to temper down every expression of personal opinion into courteous generalities. Let us learn to speak plainly and intelligibly first, and, if it may be, gracefully afterwards.

—JOHN RUSKIN.



INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
(RATIONALIST)
FINE ARTS BUILDING
CHICAGO

TO make it possible for a man to be as honest in his religion as he would like to be in his business ; to make him as unafraid in church as he aims to be anywhere else, and to help make him as impatient of a lie on Sunday as he is on any other day of the week, is the object of these studies on the bible. I wish to be able to kindle in the breast of every free citizen of this free country the love of truth, irrespective of whether it helps or hurts ; I wish to shame cowardice and cant out of every man and woman who speaks the English language.

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An Extraordinary Book

A BOOK which claims infallibility; which aspires to absolute authority over mind and body; which demands unconditional surrender to all its pretensions upon penalty of eternal damnation, is an extraordinary book and should, therefore, be subjected to extraordinary tests.

Neither Christian priests nor Jewish rabbis approve of applying to the bible the same tests by which *other* books are tried.

Why?

Because it will help the bible?

It can not be that.

Because it might *hurt* the bible?

We can think of no other reason.

But why devote so much space and time to the discussion of a book in which the educated world no longer believes? Why not take up issues that are more alive and more useful? I am of the opinion that the people who leave the bible alone do so, not because they think the book has ceased to hurt, but because they are still afraid of it, or its clientèle. The generality of reformers would rather fight giants than the great *paper* idol of the churches — because it is *safer*.

Clergymen with liberal tendencies seek to dull the edge of all criticism against the bible by admitting in advance the conclusions of scholarship in reference to it, but still pretending to find a unique use for the book as “literature.” Indeed! And since when has the

bible, from being a divine revelation, fallen to the level of mere letters? If the bible is mere literature, would the mails accept it in its present form? Would it be tolerated in the homes of the people? And why should there be a paid army of men in the service of a book which is only literature? Why so many priests and rabbis to do its bidding, and why should so many costly and untaxed temples and cathedrals be built for a book which is no more than any other literature? Why should missionaries be maintained to push the sale of this one book if it is nothing but literature? Why is the world broken up into sects and creeds without number in the name of this literature? Peculiar literature, this!

The veil lifted! I am not going to give new names to the bible, or find new *hidden* meanings in it. That is not my profession. Occultism, which enables a reader to find in any book whatever he is seeking, has never commanded my respect. By lifting the veil, I mean a very simple thing — showing up the bible.

All idols are veiled. The *veil* is the idol. Uncovered, they scare nobody. I shall try to do to the great idol of Christendom what the sun does to the earth — coax it into the light.

A Word with the Reader — Protestant and Catholic

LET me assure the prospective Catholic and Protestant readers of this volume that I do not harbor a single feeling toward them which is not of the kindest and the most respectful. I have no quarrel whatever with individuals, or with parties. It is altogether foreign to my nature to take pleasure in giving pain to others. If the truth gives pain, it is not the fault of the teacher, nor of the reader who hears it for the first time, but of error, which stabs and stings before it will surrender its victims.

Having been a Christian believer myself, I have the warmest sympathy for all who still wear the yoke of supernaturalism. But I have no pity for error. I will not consult its pleasure. I will not spare it. Before any of my readers condemn me for speaking openly, and without reservation, I trust they will think of something else I could have said about the bible which would have been better than the truth. And as I am going to make the bible speak for itself, I am sure no one will charge me with misrepresenting the facts.

But I have no business to be concerned about either pleasing or displeasing anybody. I am going to tell the truth, even if it hurts. If telling the truth hurts me, it is I, and not the truth, that has to get out of the way ; if it hurts *you*, it is you, and not the truth, that has to be sacrificed.

Not "truth for truth's sake," but "truth for humanity's sake," is the better motto, argue certain teachers ; but is there a better way of serving humanity

than through truth? Even as "Art for art's sake" will give humanity the highest art, "Truth for truth's sake" will give to the world the only bread it can live by.

A Word with the Jews

AS the bible is the work of Jewish authors, and as I say quite a little about Jews and Judaism in this book, I wish to take the pains to explain my position in advance. Rationalism is much indebted to the educated Jew. Even more is the Jew indebted to Rationalism. The only miracle in the history of Israel was performed by Rationalism. All the bible miracles are nothing in comparison. Rationalism has saved the Jew from his greatest enemy — the bible. It is to the great credit of the Jew that he has survived his "holy" book. No people have suffered more from it than the chosen people. The bible has made the Jew a wanderer and an alien in every country. When thinking of the martyrdom of this race through the centuries, the poet Heine exclaimed: "Judaism is not a religion; Judaism is a misfortune."* The same poet congratulates himself upon the hastening departure of Jehovah: "It is the old Jehovah himself that is preparing for death. Hear ye not the bells resounding? Kneel down, they are bringing the sacraments to a dying God."

The great strides which the modern Jew has made in culture as well as in commerce, he owes to his emancipation from the influence of the bible. The more he disobeys the bible the more universal he becomes in his sympathies and tastes. With the crush-

* Heine: *Philosophy and Religion in Germany*.

ing load of the bible taken off his shoulders, the Jew is swift in responding to the most beneficent influences of environment. Away from Judaism lies the salvation of the Jew. It was in Europe and America, among the Gentiles, and not in Palestine, that the Jew discovered himself. Not until he turned his back upon Jehovah and his book did the Jew leap forth to conquer in art, in literature, in science, and in all the graces that help to make genius and virtue attractive. I do not say that all persecution and prejudice will end when Jew and Christian cease to follow the teachings of the bible, but surely the most formidable obstacles to the fraternization of the races shall be removed. It is a service to humanity to try to free the Jew from the rabbinical yoke, and the Christian from that of the priest. The rabbi is as much a schismatic as the priest. The parent of both is the bible.

Once for all, I beg the readers of this book to know that I do not believe for a moment that the Jews ever taught the absurdities, or practiced the atrocities, with which the bible credits them. I do not believe they ever started on an expedition to murder babes and sucklings, or to capture girls for their harems, for which acts the bible praises them. Like the Catholics and the Protestants, the Jews, inspired by these same scriptures, have committed many follies through the centuries, but I am positive in my own mind that the terrible Old Testament picture of the Jew is a libel against humanity, as well as against the Jews.

Not until the Jew has completely parted with bible and Talmud; not until he has completely surrendered to Rationalism in mind and *body* — for as long as he practices the Abrahamic rite upon his children as a

religious duty he will continue to be an alien in every land — will the Jew end his wanderings in the wilderness and enter the land of promise.

The Messiah of the Jew, as well as of the Christian, is come. It is Rationalism. And what is Rationalism? The authority of Reason.

PART I.

I.

The Neglected Book

THE bible is a sort of national pet in this country. We are taught from the cradle to revere, and almost worship it. In time, the bible comes to be as near and dear to us as our own mothers. When anybody praises it, we applaud him; when anybody criticizes it, we feel toward him as we would toward one who has betrayed his country, or insulted the national flag.

When, recently, President Taft praised the bible by saying that "Our laws, our literature and our social life owe whatever excellence they possess largely to the influence of this, our chief classic," he was, I am sure, quite sincere. But, evidently, all he knows about the bible is what was taught him in the nursery, the Sunday-school, or the church. The majority of people who exalt the bible above all other books have not studied the book — not even read it, except a chapter here and a passage there. If the bible had been a smaller book, people would have been more familiar with its contents, but being a book of ponderous size, the generality of people have only a *dilettante* acquaintance with its contents. Really, the size of the book has been its best protection. There is scarcely any other book which is more revered, and less known, than the bible.

The bible societies, however, claim that for long centuries the bible has been the best seller. About twenty million copies a year have been disposed of during the past three hundred years. But selling a book, and getting it read, are not the same thing. There are reasons which explain the enormous traffic in bibles. A great deal of money is expended every year to push its sale. Great legacies are devoted to the translation and dissemination of the bible in every country. Powerful corporations exist all over Christendom to introduce the bible into new territories. Besides, the book is sold at a nominal price, often below cost, which is made possible by large endowments and legacies.

Another reason which explains the vogue of the bible is the fact that it is protected against all competition. The king is behind the book; the press is behind it; and a halo of divinity is thrown about it to scare people from examining their own holy book with the same freedom that they examine the holy books of other countries. What other book has ever received the patronage which the bible commands, even to-day? And what would have been the fate of the bible had no more been done for it than has been done for Shakespeare, for example? Not until all artificial helps and props have been removed, will we be in a position to say whether the bible sells on its own merits, or whether it is indebted for its popularity to special privilege.

But, as already intimated, notwithstanding these enormous sales, the bible is read so little by the present generation that it may well be called *The Neglected Book*. To prove this, we are not going to quote Rationalists, but clergymen. The complaint from every pulpit

is that the bible is being ignored by the people more and more every day. The Rev. Lyman Abbott read, at one of his lectures, a chapter from the bible, without, however, mentioning the name of the book to his hearers. He was addressing an *élite* audience; on the platform were judges, bankers and the "first citizens" of the town. At the conclusion of his lecture two of the gentlemen on the platform, one of them a judge, asked him for the name of the book he had read from. Lyman Abbott himself tells this and other similar stories to show how ignorant the American public is of the contents of the book they venerate so piously and gush over so spectacularly.

The very people, however, who are so ignorant of the bible, would be the first to throw up their hands in horror should the least criticism be directed against its contents. The same complaint, namely, that people are neglecting the study of the bible, is made by other clergymen. In schools and colleges, even, great ignorance has been discovered among the pupils about the bible. Professor Hamilton reports that, in visiting certain schools in New York, he found among pupils preparing for college, and nearly of an age for entrance, whole classes that could not answer the easiest questions about the contents of the bible.

It is my opinion that the complaining clergymen themselves are not so well acquainted with the bible as they should be. Of course, no harm is done either to science or ethics by this general ignorance of the stories in the bible; personally, I am pleased at the indifference of the public to a collection of writings which has to be labeled "holy" to command respect.

The above facts are quoted only to prove that,

despite its enormous sales, the bible is a stranger in the home, the school, the study, the shop, and in all the assemblies of the people. But the less some people are acquainted with the bible, the more they seem to believe in it. Indeed, ignorance of the bible is indispensable to faith in its inspiration. Moreover, it is this ignorant veneration which makes it dangerous for any one to read and tell the truth about it. Formerly, when the church had the power, such a man was either hacked to pieces, or burned to cinders; to-day, even, he is persecuted as much as public opinion will permit. It is a matter of history that in the name of this Jewish-Christian volume, which people do not read and are but superficially acquainted with, nearly a hundred millions of lives have been destroyed in Europe alone. Could anything be more appalling? In modern times, the church can no longer do to the unbelievers in the bible what it did to them for over seventeen hundred years, but it does to them as much as public sentiment will allow.

The reader will be interested in examining with me the book in the defense of which, I regret to say, nearly every imaginable crime has been committed. It gives me pain to say this, but who can hide the truth? Moreover, my sole purpose in telling the plain truth is not to offend, or give pain, but to encourage everybody to approach the book without fear. I am not going to praise the bible; but I am not going to denounce it either; I am going to *explain* it.

It is my desire not so much to talk about the bible—when, and where, and by whom, it was compiled; how it was lost and discovered; burned in the destruction of the temple, and later restored by the scribe Ezra;

how it has been edited and revised again and again * — but to lift the veil and show the book to the world.

What Makes a Book Inspired?

BEFORE proceeding to read the book, may I explain that an *inspired* book must be different from uninspired books. If it has excellences and defects like other books, then it is in no sense different from any of the works of man. An inspired book must be a perfect book, else what advantage is there in being inspired? Again, an inspired book must contain original matter, to justify its inspiration. If the bible needed the help of inspiration to say what other books have said without inspiration, then, instead of being a greater, it must needs be a more ordinary book. Is there anything in the bible which can not be found elsewhere? While there is not a single idea in the bible which was not known before, there are many glorious truths of science and philosophy in other books which can not be found in the bible. Wherein, then, is the bible inspired?

Let me also explain that an argument, or the presentation of important facts, produces an impression only upon the unprejudiced. The soundest reasoning will no more convince a partisan than the most copious shower will give nourishment to the sand. But an argument is never addressed to a biased mind. The appeal of reason is to the fairminded and the free.

When, for instance, it is shown that certain passages are in one bible, and not in another; or how pas-

* These questions are discussed in the author's pamphlet, *How the Bible Was Invented*.

sages, regarded as divine at one time, have been dropped or altered in more recent revisions, a telling point is made against an infallible book, in the opinion of all honest minds. Or, when it is shown that the bible positively teaches falsehood and immorality, the question of inspiration is at once closed for all self-respecting and impartial judges. But, as intimated, nothing can satisfy prejudice, or conquer wilful ignorance. Prejudice on the one hand, and stupidity on the other, are as impervious to argument as a duck's back is to water.

The present book is not for minds that are closed. When we go to court to have a case tried, the value of the evidence we present does not depend upon the appreciation of our adversary's counsel. However convincing our testimony, he will never admit that it proves his client guilty. It is the impartial judge, and it is, again, the open-minded jury, that must pass upon the evidence. In the same way, what we say here about the bible will not convert the priests or the rabbis. We do not write for them. Our book will have no effect upon the pope; it is not meant to change *his* views. This book is for those who can afford the truth.

In conclusion, the bible is a very *delicate* subject to handle. The material in hand is so prodigious, and of such a nature, that I am at a loss to know what to say and what to omit. There are many things in the bible to which I would like to call attention but which I am debarred from so doing because good taste will not allow it. Yet not to be able to refer to these matters places me in the position of an attorney who has his best witnesses and evidence thrown out by a ruling of the court. The church people are permitted to go on and print in every language the texts and stories of

the bible which I am not allowed even to read in public — much less to comment on them. They can sell the book by the millions, containing absurdities and atrocities which, by order of the court (that is to say, of public opinion, or of good taste), I am prohibited from referring to in my argument against the authority of the book. The reader can have no idea what a protection that is to the bible. The defendant, as it were, has gagged the prosecution. It needs no effort to realize how much the bible is indebted to this fact for its being tolerated at all in the twentieth century. Courtesy prevents the exposure which would completely change the world's opinion of the book.

But one can be a little freer in a book than on a public platform. Many of the texts quoted in this volume could not have been read from the platform. But there are numerous passages in the bible which would cause even cold print to blush. We shall not disturb those.

The Sects and Their Bibles

THE Jews deny that the second half of the bible is inspired; the Christians admit that the first part of the bible is not as binding as the second part.

The Jew fails to observe that, in denying inspiration to the New Testament, he is also depriving the Old of its inspiration. The arguments by which he disproves the New Testament are the same which disprove the Old, and all other "inspired" documents.

The Christian, by admitting that the Old Testament is no longer as binding upon the conscience of man as it was at one time, or as the New Testament is now,

surrenders the whole question of inspiration. If the Old Testament has been superseded, the New might be, too. If what God says in one part of the book can be ignored by the Christians, what he says in another part of the book may just as reasonably be ignored by the Jews, and—this is important—what God says in either part of the book may be ignored by the *Rationalist*. In other words, the Rationalist agrees with the Christian that the Old Testament is *passé*, and with the Jews, that the New Testament is nothing more than ecclesiastical literature. The Rationalist uses the arguments of the Jew against the New Testament, and the arguments of the Christian against the Old, with the result that practically both Testaments fall by the blows of the sectarians themselves. Both Jew and Christian seem to be unable to perceive, or if they do, they are unwilling to admit, that not only has each destroyed the position of the other, but also his own.

All the objections which the Jew brings against Christianity are equally valid against his own Judaism. Does he object to the Christian trinity? There is a trinity also in his religion. In Genesis we read that the Lord appeared unto Abraham in three persons. He entertained and worshiped the three men as one Lord.* Does the Jew object to the dogma of incarnation? In the Old Testament, God repeatedly appears in flesh and blood. Is it the immaculate conception that the Jew can not accept? In Judaism, too, that miracle was of frequent occurrence. Maidens in the Old Testament, as in the New, see an angel of the Lord and become pregnant. Is it the doctrine of hell to

* Genesis xviii.

which the Jew objects? Jesus, in all probability, borrowed it from the Talmud. Is it an exclusive salvation that the Jew rejects? But the *extra ecclesia non est salus* of the Catholic is but another version of the "Outside Israel there is no salvation" of the Old Testament. Is it the doctrine of blood atonement in the New Testament which offends him? The Old Testament is as *red* as the New. The difference between Judaism and Christianity is one of name, largely. Is it not remarkable how people will subscribe to the very doctrines which they reject, if presented to them under a different name? Jew and Christian have persecuted one another in the past. Why? Only for a name. The pity of it! Judaism is Christianity, and Christianity is Judaism. They are called by different names — that is all.

To the Jew we say: "You will not take upon you the yoke of the New Testament; cast down also the yoke of the Old." And to the Christian we say: "You have already emancipated yourself from the authority of the Old Testament to a great extent; free yourself also from the authority of the New."

Catholic and Protestant Bibles

THE Catholics do not believe in the Protestant bible; the Protestants do not trust the Catholic bible. Each tells the truth about the bible of the other, but not of his own.

As in the case of the Jew and the Christian, neither the Catholic nor the Protestant seems to realize that in condemning each other's bible as untrustworthy, or as a manipulated copy, they are condemning also each his own bible. If the Catholics have tampered with

the Word of God, as the Protestants claim they have; and if the Protestants have a defective bible, as the Catholics charge, then the claim that God has preserved his revelation from human error falls to the ground. If God did not protect the Protestant bible from corruption, he is liable to be equally unconcerned about the Catholic bible, from which it follows that the Word of God can be, and has been, corrupted, which, if true — and both Catholics and Protestants say it is — then there is no incorruptible Word of God.

The Rationalist shares with the Catholic the latter's opinion of the Protestant bible; and of the Catholic bible, it doubts its reliability just as the Protestants do. Putting what the Protestants and Catholics say of each other's bible side by side, the Rationalist arrives at the conclusion that both bibles are untrustworthy.

Let us now consider another phase of the Catholic-Protestant position on the bible. The Protestants are apparently very anxious to make the reading of the bible in the home and the school imperative; the Catholics, on the other hand, seek to make it equally imperative *not* to read the bible. It is well known that the popes of Rome, as heads of the church and vicars of Christ, have repeatedly forbidden the reading of the bible by the people. An index of forbidden books is kept in Rome for the guidance of the faithful, and, surprising as it may seem, the bible was placed upon this *Index Expurgatorius* by the popes themselves. The bull of Pius IV. reads: "Whosoever shall dare to own a copy of this book (bible) and read it without having procured a special dispensation shall not receive absolution for his sins."

Similar prohibitions were given by Pius VI., Leo

XII., Gregory XVI., Pius IX. in his Syllabus, and Clement XI. in his famous bull, *Unigenitus*. In the *Index* of forbidden books of Pope Innocent XI., 1704, one of the books forbidden is "the bible in any of the popular languages."

This prohibition was not against the Protestant bibles only, for the fourth clause in the *Index* is a warning against Catholic bibles as well, "*bibliorum Catholicis autoribus versorum*."

My sympathies in this matter are with the Catholics; if the bible is an infallible book, we ought to have an infallible reader. To say that everybody may interpret the bible as he pleases is to say that the bible has no meaning at all, except what the readers themselves *read* into it. But if it has an infallible meaning, only an infallible interpreter can pronounce upon it. And when it is remembered that an erroneous interpretation might be the means of damning the souls of many, it becomes a positive duty not to read the book for one's self. The Pope may read it, because being infallible, he can not misread it. I admire the logic of the Catholic church in this respect. Grant the premises that the bible is a special revelation — and infallible — and all the arguments of the Protestants against the Catholic position shatter to pieces, like the waves against a rock.

But, as already intimated, the Protestants believe in putting the bible in every house, hotel and school. They want every man to carry a pocket-bible; and if women had pockets they would be urged to do the same. From all this one would suppose that they were very anxious to get everybody acquainted with the contents of the bible. The different ministerial assemblies, at their annual gatherings, recently attacked by official resolu-

tions the decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois, which made the reading of the bible in the public schools unconstitutional. The Protestant churches do not seem to care at all about the constitution — they want the bible in the schools, constitution or no constitution. In the twentieth century the supreme court rules the bible out of the people's schools! Had not Greece fallen before the wave of Asiatic mysticism, the bible would have been ruled out of Europe two thousand years ago. The Supreme Court of Illinois is doing now what the supreme court of Europe should have done in the year one. Notwithstanding protests to the contrary, I am of the opinion that the Protestants are at heart as opposed to the reading of the bible as the Catholics. Indeed, they would have everybody read the bible, but they must not read it with their own eyes, but as Calvin, or Wesley, or Luther read it. But that is not different from the Catholic position that the Pope must read the bible for the people. If the Protestants really permit each to read and interpret the bible according to his best thought, why are there heresy trials among them? That is a searching question. Heresy trials prove beyond a doubt that the Protestants do not wish anybody to read the bible for himself. See what the church did to me for reading the bible with my own eyes. At the age of twenty-five, myself, my wife and baby were dispossessed of church, position and support. What was done to me for reading the bible with my own eyes has been done to thousands of others?

“Let *me* read the bible for you,” says the Catholic.

“Read the bible with *my* eyes,” says the Protestant.

What is the difference?

Catholics Make Their Own Bible

ONE of the significant facts about the bible is that no two copies of it are exactly alike. There are nearly as many versions of it as there are sects. The most important variations are to be found between Catholic and Protestant bibles. As I write I have before me a copy of the Catholic "Holy Bible," on the title-page of which are these words:

HOLY BIBLE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN VULGATE.

This edition of the Holy Catholic Bible, having been duly examined, is hereby approved of.

Then follows a long list of the names of bishops and archbishops. It is thus intimated that no bible is the "Word of God" unless it has the endorsement of these Catholic dignitaries. Only after these men have examined the bible and given it their sanction does the book become "divine." No layman can tell for himself, unaided by a priest, the "Word of God" from the word of man. In fact, it is the priest who changes the word of man into the "Word of God" by the same process that he converts ordinary bread into a God.

There is given also in the "Holy Catholic Bible," before me, a list of the books which are pronounced to be "inspired" by the Council of Trent. To introduce into the bible any book not contained in this list, or to exclude from the bible any one of the books which the Council of Trent has decided to be

“inspired,” is to be guilty of blasphemy. This is what it says :

Now if any one reading over these books in all their parts, as they are usually read in the Catholic Church . . . does not hold them sacred and canonical . . . and does industriously condemn them let him be anathema.

To be *anathema* means to be accursed. In other words, there is no choice ; it is the Catholic bible or a curse. No man has any right to choose for himself, or decide according to his own conscience and knowledge, which is the “Word of God,” or how much in the various bibles is actually “the Word of God.” He must, then, choose between the priest’s bible or — his curse. To try to prove a book “inspired” by threatening to *curse* all those who may tell the truth about it, is a sure sign that the makers of the bible themselves do not believe in its inspiration. It is impossible to think that if the priests really believed the bible to be “divine,” they would have undertaken to hedge it about with anathemas. But they curse to conceal their own unbelief. There is not another book that had to curse its readers to make them believe in it.

The most effective argument against the bible is furnished by the church itself. For nearly fifteen hundred years it hanged and burned people alive to make them believe in the bible. That is a good way to prove one’s unbelief, not one’s faith. It shows what little confidence the Catholics had in the ability of “the Word of God” to defend itself against a Giordano Bruno, when they burned him at the stake ; and how dubious the Protestants were of *their* bible, when they burned Michael Servetus at the stake. The long list of terrible crimes committed in defense of the bible is

a conclusive proof, first, of the unbelief of the Christians themselves in the ability of the bible to win men by the beauty and truth of its teachings; and, second, of the evil influence of the book upon those who accepted its authority.

The preface to the Catholic bible offers a further proof of the lack of confidence of Christians in "the Word of God." It forbids people, as already shown, to read the Word of God without first securing the consent of a priest. It is a heinous thing, according to the church authorities, to undertake to read the bible on one's own responsibility. "To prevent and remedy this abuse" (namely, that of reading the bible, and interpreting it for one's self), says this same preface, "it was judged necessary to forbid the reading of the scriptures in the vulgar tongues." Of course, there is no prohibition against reading it in Latin, or Hebrew, or Greek, or in any language that one does not understand, but it is forbidden to read it in the *vulgar*, that is to say, in any language that the reader is familiar with, "without the advice and permission of the pastors and spiritual guides whom God has appointed to govern his church." To prove this authority of the priest to forbid the reading of the bible, the following text is quoted: "He that will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."*

The church *must* be obeyed. The commandment says nothing about obeying the church only when she is in the right, or only when she is reasonable, or even only when she is scriptural—she must be obeyed

* Matthew xviii, 17, *Catholic Bible*.

because she is the church. And this, too, is quite consistent with the claims of an infallible revelation. If everybody is to be given the liberty to decide when the church is right, reasonable, or scriptural, and when she is not, then it is not the church, but the individual, who is infallible. If the bible is "inspired," there is no escape from the conclusions of the Catholic church. Did not Jesus say to the Apostles, and, therefore, to the priests: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"?* Does not this make everybody the slave of the church?

The Catholic bible contains nearly a dozen more "inspired" books than the Protestant bible, and many of the texts in the books which are common to both are differently translated. By comparing the list of books in the Catholic bible with the books in the Protestant bible, we find that the Protestants are "accursed" by the decision of the Council of Trent, inasmuch as they deny the inspiration of, and exclude from their bible, about twelve of the books in the Catholic bible. Now, what is a layman to do when infallible churches disagree? We are commanded by the bible to hear the church, but which church? If we could decide ourselves which is the true church, we would then be greater than the church, as it would need our approval before it could exercise any authority over us. But if we can not decide which is the true church, what are we going to do? This is an important question, because unless we belong to the true church we can not have the true bible.

* Matthew xviii, 18, *Catholic Bible*.

The Catholics "curse" the Protestant bible. This is the literal truth. The Protestants, on the other hand, call the Catholic bible "a popish imposture." While they are wrangling about it, what becomes of the Word of God?

But the most interesting part in the preface to the Catholic bible is the warning which the church gives to the reader of the bible, not to be shocked, or scandalized, by the immoral and impossible stories contained therein. The reader is cautioned against applying to the bible the standard of morality by which other books are judged. To scare the reader into praising in the bible what he would unreservedly and sweepingly condemn in other books, the following biblical text is quoted:

My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are my ways as your ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are exalted above the earth even so are my ways exalted above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*

Well, of course, that being the case, the reader shall start with his mind made up that he must not understand anything he reads. The better and much safer thing to do is *not* to read the bible at all. And that is honestly what both Catholics and Protestants would like to say, if they could. The Catholic bible in its preface comes as near giving that advice as it dares, as the following will show:

How then shall any one, by his private reason, pretend to judge, to know, to demonstrate, the *incomprehensible and unsearchable* ways of God?

What is the use of reading an "incomprehensible" and "unsearchable" book? The Word of God could not have been meant for man. Let it pass.

* Isaiah lv, 8-9, *Catholic Bible*; same in Protestant bible.

PART II.

I.

The Tercentenary of the English Bible

JUST at present there is a revival of interest in the bible. The three hundredth anniversary of the King James' version of the Holy Bible was recently celebrated in the great cities of Christendom. All the pulpits have been heard from in praise of the book. It will be noticed, however, that almost every one of the preachers confined himself to glittering generalities about the bible. Judging by the reports of their sermons, there was not a single speaker who attempted a careful and instructive study of the book — its origin, its growth, or the character of its contents. Although the book was eloquently praised as the best ever written, no effort was made to point out wherein, or in what respect, the bible deserved the honor and the worship demanded in its behalf. The preachers spoke of the bible with the same confidence, or conceit, that the Moslem displays when he is praising *his* bible. One of the well-known speakers, W. J. Bryan, challenged the world, at the bible-meeting in Chicago, to produce a better book than the Jewish-Christian scriptures.

The celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the publication of the authorized version presented also an opportunity to many of the defenders of the

bible to praise the translators of the bible under King James of England. An idea of the moral and intellectual standing of these divines may be had by reading the preface which is attached to every bible printed in Great Britain. In this, they dedicate the work to the king, whom they exalt as a paragon of virtue. James I. was, by universal consent, one of the meanest and most worthless pedants that ever wore a crown. Yet, even as the divines who formulated the Nicene creed addressed to Constantine, who had murdered the members of his own household in cold blood, the words, "You have established the faith, exterminated the heretics. That the king of heaven may preserve the king of earth is the prayer of the church and clergy," the English authors of the authorized version looked upon James, the meanest of the Stuarts, as the vicar of God on earth, and presented him the following address:

To the Most High and Mighty Prince James, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, the translators of the Bible wish Grace, Mercy and Peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Great and manifold were the blessings, most dread Sovereign, which Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, bestowed upon us, the people of England, when first he sent Your Majesty's Royal Person to rule and reign over us. For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well unto our Sion, that upon the setting of that bright Occidental Star, Queen Elizabeth of most happy memory, some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this Land that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk; and that it should hardly be known who was to direct the unsettled State; the appearance of Your Majesty, as of the Sun of strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmised mists and gave unto all that were well affected exceeding cause of comfort; especially when we beheld the Government established in Your Highness, and Your hopeful Seed, by an undoubted Title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquillity at home and abroad.

And much more, in this same strain, concluding with these words :

The Lord of heaven and earth bless Your Majesty with many and happy days, that, as his heavenly hand hath enriched Your Highness with many singular and extraordinary graces, so You may be the wonder of the world in this latter age for happiness and true felicity, to the honour of that great God and the good of his Church, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and only Saviour.

What made these "divines" so proud of James? He was *their* king. What makes the "divines" of to-day praise the bible so effusively? It is *their* bible. We regret to say that the "divines" of to-day no more speak the truth about the bible than the "divines" of three hundred years ago spoke the truth about King James.

Some Lay Defenders of the Bible—Bryan's Challenge

ONE of the speakers at the tercentenary celebration was William Jennings Bryan. Though not a "divine" as yet, he may become one, according to reports, in the near future. Bryan was invited to deliver the principal address at a mass meeting of the Christian churches of Chicago (the Catholic church not included), in Orchestra Hall. In this address, the oft-time presidential candidate openly challenged the critics of his bible and of its divine origin "to produce a book equal in wisdom and teachings to the volume which has stood the test of centuries."

After I made sure that Mr. Bryan had really made the challenge, as will appear by the quotations from his paper, *The Commoner*, which will be given later,

a telegram was addressed to him, signed by myself, in which I accepted his challenge and invited him to state the terms on which he would join me in the discussion of this timely and most important subject, at the Auditorium, which seats six thousand people. Receiving no reply, a telegram was forwarded to the proprietor of the *Lincoln Star* — Lincoln being the home town of Mr. Bryan — requesting the publisher to please interview Mr. Bryan about this matter. To the courtesy of this gentleman I am indebted for the following message from Lincoln:

Charles Bryan has forwarded letter to W. J. Bryan, who returns here June 3. Will hand Mr. Bryan your telegram when he reaches Lincoln.

The "Charles Bryan" in the dispatch is, I am told, the secretary, as well as the brother, of William Jennings Bryan. He says he has forwarded letter, ostensibly about my telegram, to W. J. Bryan. Why did he not send him the telegram, itself? If his letter merely informed Bryan that there was a telegram for him from Chicago, without either enclosing the same in his letter, or telling him of its contents, Mr. Bryan had good reason to discharge such a secretary. But if he enclosed the telegram, or, which is more likely, informed Mr. Bryan of its import, why does he say that he will hand the telegram to Bryan "when the latter reaches Lincoln"? Why keep a telegram a whole month before giving it to the person to whom it is addressed? But if his letter had already advised Bryan of my acceptance of his challenge, and my offer to let him dictate his own terms, why pretend that the telegram will remain sealed until Mr. Bryan returns to Lincoln on the third of June?

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Evidently, all that the two Bryans wanted was to postpone the day of reckoning. The third day of June arrived, but no answer came from Bryan. Another appeal was made to the *Lincoln Star*:

If no trouble, would you mind finding if Bryan is at home; and what he expects to do about Mangasarian's acceptance of his challenge.

And as promptly as in the former instance, the answer came:

Bryan says he will take no action re challenge.

But it was Mr. Bryan who made the challenge in the first place. His challenge was not only made in public, but it is now in print, as the following from the report of his Orchestra Hall address, as it appeared in Bryan's own paper, fully shows:

The Christian world has confidence in the bible; it presents the book as the Word of God, but the attacks made upon it by its enemies continue in spite of the growth of the bible's influence. The Christian world by its attitude presents a challenge to the opposition, and this is an opportune moment to emphasize the challenge.

How does the distinguished Nebraskan get over these words? If "*The Christian world . . . presents a challenge to the opposition, and this is an opportune moment to emphasize the challenge,*" why did not Mr. Bryan promptly and gladly accept an offer which placed one of the greatest halls in the country at his disposal, without any expense whatever to himself or to the Christian world? To say the least, it is significant that a successful orator and popular lecturer like Mr. Bryan, with his implicit confidence in the bible as the best book in all the world, would even hesitate, much less decline, to accept so great an opportunity as was placed at his disposal. Moreover, if he

were not going to make "the action suit the word," why did he speak of a challenge at all? Was this only an oratorical display on his part? Was it mere bravado? If he were talking on the same subject again, would he repeat his challenge to the "opposition"? If our little episode with him will prevent him from ever using the word "challenge" again in his religious speeches, we shall consider our services well rewarded.

But the real reason for Bryan's collapse as a bible champion will be seen in perusing the following comments on his address at the tercentenary celebration.

Bryan's Defense of the Bible

AS reported in *The Commoner*,* Bryan began his address by saying that the critics of the bible

have disputed the facts which it sets forth and ridiculed the prophesies which it recites; they have rejected the account which it gives of the creation and scoffed at the miracles which it records. They have denied the existence of the God of the Bible and have sought to reduce the Savior to the stature of a man. They have been as bold as the prophets of Baal in defying the Living God and in heaping contempt upon the Written Word. Why not challenge the atheists and the materialists to put their doctrines to the test? When Elijah was confronted by a group of scorners who mocked at the Lord whom he worshiped, he invited them to match the power of their God against the power of his, and he was willing to concede superiority to the one who would answer with fire. When the challenge was accepted he built an altar, prepared a sacrifice, and then, to leave no room for doubt, he poured water upon the wood and the sacrifice—poured until the water filled the trenches round about. So firm was his trust that he even taunted his adversaries with their failure while his proofs were yet to be presented. The prophets of Baal, be it said to their credit, had enough confidence in their God to agree to the test, and their disappointment

* May 12, 1911.

was real when he failed them — they gashed themselves with knives when their entreaties were unanswered.

Why not a bible test?

Mr. Bryan does not tell the rest of the story, although as much of it as he gives is bad enough. Elijah had no desire to convert his rivals to the true faith; he wanted to kill every one of them, which he did:

And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. . . . And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

This is the same Elijah who prayed for a drought, and for the space of three years not a drop of rain fell upon the land. If there is an educated man who can admire such a prayer, or the Being who answered it, or who can believe that for three years, men, women, children, plants and animals went thirsty — he is really beyond hope.

Mr. Bryan did not accept our invitation, because, I believe, he felt that he would not have the courage to repeat this story of Elijah before any other kind of an audience than one composed strictly of such Christian or Jewish believers who *dare* not think straight.

What, for instance, would Bryan have answered if he were asked why Elijah did not leave to the deity the killing of the four hundred and fifty priests of an alien faith? If God could send down fire from heaven to burn up the bullock, he could just as easily send down fire to destroy the whole priesthood of Baal — as he sent down fire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. But Elijah executed his critics himself; he did not believe, evidently, that his God could get rid of them

* There were 450 of them.

without his help. In this he was more infidel than the priests he killed. Murder was Elijah's intent from the first. In the history of religious persecution was there ever a priest who believed enough in God to leave to him the burning, or the quartering of heretics alive? How much nobler was the example of the Roman emperor who refused to give his sanction to religious persecution on the ground that the gods could avenge their own wrongs.*

And does Bryan really believe that, once upon a time, the only way the Deity could hold his own was by giving pyrotechnic exhibitions, which ended in wholesale bloodshed? Is that the kind of a test Bryan desires? The fact that there are even more unbelievers to-day than in Elijah's time is a proof that the "fire and blood" test is a failure. It is Reason that questions the bible, Mr. Bryan! And if the bible can not conquer Reason, all the murders, the burnings and the hells of theology, here or hereafter, are worse than a waste. Can'st thou conquer Reason?

But again, Bryan declines a meeting with Rationalists, because he is not sure that the God who answered Elijah by fire will do the same for him. If he were, he would not have hesitated for a moment. He would have had an altar built on the platform and invoked the fire which would have come down as soon as Bryan gave the word — injuring no one except the unbelievers. But his faith was not strong enough for that. He is a good enough Christian to believe that, once upon a time, that very thing happened, but not a good enough Christian to believe that it will happen a second time. The church has only *old* miracles to boast of.

* *Deorum injurias deis curae.*

If I were in Mr. Bryan's place, I admit, I would have declined an invitation to defend the bible before an audience of inquirers, just as he has done. The mistake he made was his *challenge* "to the opposition," as he expresses it, and not his refusal to appear as counsel for the bible before a critical audience. He did the only consistent thing under the circumstances when he told the representative of the press that he will not consider our invitation. Had he been equally thoughtful in his Orchestra Hall address he would not have even admitted that there are some people who do not believe in the inspired bible — much less have challenged them.

A good Christian must never undertake to defend his bible against criticism; the moment he attempts this he takes the whole question out of God's hands. Who are *you* that you should undertake to defend the Word of God? And what makes you think that God's Word needs a defense? No better proof could be asked for to show that both Bryan and his hearers had lost the faith of Elijah, and were struggling in the slough of doubt, than his elaborate attempt to defend the bible and his mock challenge to its critics. The difference between Bryan *defending* an infallible book, and the critics of the same book, is not one of kind, but one of degree. Bryan would not have undertaken to defend the bible did he not think a defense was necessary, and to think that God's book needs to be defended is a criticism against the book. The Nebraska champion of the bible, then, has already entered the first stages of the doubt which, in all logical minds, culminates in a denial of its divine origin. No book which has to be defended can be divine.

The man who defends a *divine* book and the man who attacks it are both doubters.

Mr. Bryan might reply that, had he been a doubter, he would never have challenged "the opposition," as he did in his tercentenary address. As already stated, it is true that he made the challenge, and repeated it many times during the course of his speech. It is equally true that there is an air of confidence in Mr. Bryan's challenge, which must have greatly impressed his audience. "Let them produce," he demanded, "a better bible than ours, if they can."

Let them collect the best of their school to be found among the graduates of universities—as many as they please and from every land. Let the members of this selected group travel where they will, consult such libraries as they please, and employ every modern means of swift communication. Let them glean in the fields of geology, botany, astronomy, biology and zoölogy, and then roam at will wherever science has opened a way; let them take advantage of all the progress in art and in literature, in oratory and in history—let them use to the full every instrumentality that is employed in modern civilization; and when they have exhausted every source, let them embody the results of their best intelligence in a book and offer it to the world as a substitute for this bible of ours. Have they the confidence that the prophets of Baal had in their God? Will they try? If not, what excuse will they give? Has man fallen from his high estate, so that we can not rightfully expect as much of him now as nineteen centuries ago? Or does the bible come to us from a source that is higher than man—which?

Any one listening to this flourish of trumpets would be led to think that Mr. Bryan has already met and routed the enemy, and is now celebrating his victory, instead of having yet to hear from the other side. Encouraged by the silence of his audience, the speaker grows bolder:

But our case is even stronger. The opponents of the bible can not take refuge in the plea that man is retrograding. They loudly proclaim that man has grown and that he is growing.

still. They boast of a world-wide advance and their claim is founded upon fact.

And Mr. Bryan expresses surprise that, with all this progress, the world is unable "to produce a better book to-day than man, unaided, could have produced in any previous age."

Referring once more to "the opposition," he says:

The fact that they have tried, time and time again, only to fail each time more hopelessly, explains why they will not — why they can not — accept the challenge thrown down by the Christian world to produce a book worthy to take the bible's place.

Growing bolder and bolder, in the absence of "the enemy," and feeling confident that should "the enemy" be heard from, he could take refuge in a dignified silence, Mr. Bryan continues, like Don Quixote, to fight invisible foes:

They (the agnostics) have prayed to their God to answer with fire — prayed to inanimate matter, with an earnestness that is pathetic; they have employed in the worship of blind force a faith greater than religion requires, but their Almighty is asleep.

Had Mr. Bryan's "Almighty" been awake there would have been no need of defenders of the bible. If the agnostics without divine aid, or with only a "sleepy" God to help them, as Bryan avers, have done no more than to compel the believers to put up a defense for their Word of God, they have demonstrated what man, unaided by ghostly powers, can do. And it is mere chatter to speak of agnostics as praying "to their God to answer with fire," etc. Agnostics will pray for fire only when they lose faith in Reason.

And is it to be inferred from the above sentence of Bryan, that his God answers by fire? We say again, if this champion of an obsolete theology, a theology

which is being deserted by the Christian scholars themselves, is in earnest, if he really believes all he says, if he dares to put his faith to such a test as Elijah imposed upon his, or if he is prepared to prove to an intelligent audience that the science, the history, and the ethics of the bible can stand all the strain that Reason and Conscience may put upon them—why did he run under cover as soon as he heard the first sound of the Rationalist's approach? Mr. Bryan speaks with an air of confidence, as the extracts from his speech show, but no battles are won by — *air*.

In his lecture on "The Prince of Peace," Mr. Bryan takes the position that to doubt or to question the doctrines of the churches is something to be ashamed of. To show the difference in mentality between William Jennings Bryan and the great Thomas Jefferson, one has only to compare the daring and independence of the latter with the theological timidity of the former.

From Bryan's "Prince of Peace":

My purpose in delivering this lecture I will frankly avow. After my first political defeat, I deliberately refrained from talking religion in public, so as to avoid the charge of using religion as a stepping-stone to further my personal ambitions. After my second defeat the possibility of another nomination appeared so remote that I could not let it weigh against the duty that I felt impelling me to address the young men whom I saw refusing to attach themselves to a church. My hope is that I may shame some young men out of their conceit that it is smart to be skeptical.

From Jefferson's works, Vol. II, 2171:

Fix Reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason than of blindfolded fear. . . . Do not be frightened from this inquiry by any fear of its consequences. If it end in a belief that there is no God, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness

you feel in the exercise and in the love of others which it will procure for you.

The Presbyterian Bryan is ashamed of Reason; the Rationalist Jefferson is prouder of his Reason than an emperor of his crown.

Had Mr. Bryan been reading Cicero instead of Elijah; had his culture been European instead of Asiatic, he would never have quoted the murder of four hundred and fifty men by one of the bible prophets as a proof of the truth of his religion. "There are two ways of ending a dispute," wrote Cicero,— "discussion and force. The latter manner is simply that of brute beasts, the former is proper to beings gifted with reason."

We leave it to Mr. Bryan to read between the lines.

II.

Roosevelt on the Bible

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN was not the only politician, or publicist, who contributed to the tercentenary celebration of the bible. Writing in the *Outlook*, Theodore Roosevelt, to his own satisfaction, at least, meets the opponents of the inspiration of the bible, and briefly disposes of them. "Occasional critics," he writes, "taking sections of the Old Testament, are able to point out that the teachings therein are not in accordance with our own convictions and views of morality." Is it only "occasional" critics who express disapproval of the Jewish-Christian scriptures? And suppose it true that only "occasional" critics call attention to the harm which the bible does by its immoral and impossible teachings: Does that

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fact relieve the defenders of the bible from the obligation to answer their criticisms? The important question is not, who makes the criticism; but, is the criticism just?

"The Old Testament," continues Mr. Roosevelt, "did not carry Israel as far as the New Testament has carried us; but it advanced Israel far beyond the point any neighboring nation had then reached." This is practically a plea of guilty. Why was not the Old Testament as good as the New is supposed to be? Was it not equally divine? If the Old Testament was meant to prepare the Jews to accept the New Testament, they have not accepted it yet. But is it true that "the Old Testament carried Israel far beyond the point any neighboring nation had then reached"?

It is now nearly two thousand years since the New Testament began to "carry us," and where have we reached? In how many things have we advanced beyond the Greeks and the Romans, for instance? Only yesterday the black man carried chains in our land, and throughout Christendom white slavery of a more degrading type than ever known before is still with us. Political corruption of a character which Mr. Roosevelt himself has pronounced the most deep-seated and chronic is eating away the vital parts of the American nation, while the hunger, the misery and the squalor in the slums of our great cities, side by side with the waste of wealth and the worship of show, prove daily the complete failure of Christianity as a regenerating force. Whatever of hope there is to-day in the human heart for a better future on earth, and whatever signs there may be of a realization of justice and happiness for all men, here and now, we are

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indebted for them, not to the New Testament, but to modern thought, which is heresy from the point of view of the New, as well as the Old, Testament.

It is the passing of the bible that has opened the way for real and radical reforms. It is the failure of the inspired teachers to fulfill their promises that has at last induced man to step to the front and assume full control of the world's destinies. Man no longer prays to the gods; he works. When the bible was supreme in Europe, was the world better? Would Mr. Roosevelt return to the Middle Ages? Will he go back to the times of Knox, Wesley, Calvin and the New England clergy, or to the times when, by the authority of the bible which then ruled without a rival, in court and church, in the home and the school, men and women were bought and sold like animals, or burned alive as witches, or tortured to death in a thousand dungeons for daring to think? When the bible was supreme in Europe there was neither science nor commerce. When the bible was supreme, tyrant and dissolute kings ruled by the "grace of God," and priests persecuted the thinker in every capital of the Christian world. It is the emancipation of thought, and not the New Testament, that has conquered for us *every* blessing we enjoy. Not until the Renaissance, that is to say, not until Europe deserted its Semitic or Asiatic teachers for those of Hellas and Rome, did modern nations begin to wax strong in mind and body. The New Testament really carried us to the times of the Old Testament. It was the Renaissance of Greek thought and art that changed the "thorns and thistles" of theology into the golden fruit of science.

But what about the claim that "the Old Testament

advanced Israel far beyond the point any neighboring nation had then reached." I wish Mr. Roosevelt would read these lines as carefully as I have read his, which, if he does, I feel confident he will admit that he made the above statement without taking the pains to look up the evidence. What answer would the ex-president of the United States make if he were asked to prove his claim that the Old Testament carried the Jews to a higher state of civilization than the nations who were their contemporaries?

Were the Jews intellectually more advanced than any other nation of antiquity? Solomon was the contemporary of some of the immortal Greeks, but while Greece was nursing the arts and crafts, the Jews, in order to build a temple to God — a temple very much smaller than many of our modern cathedrals and churches and far less formidable — had to send abroad for masons and carpenters. "The laborers employed in the temple were all the strangers in the land," says one of the texts. Under Saul, their first king, while their enemies were well equipped with weapons of warfare, the Jews had "neither sword nor spear in the hand of any of the people except Saul and Jonathan." We are informed also that "in all the land of Israel not a smith was to be found," and that the Jews had to cross over to the land of the gentiles "to sharpen every man his share and his ax." Surely we can not conclude from conditions as barbarous as these that the Lord bestowed any great intellectual gifts upon the Jews as tokens of his peculiar love for them.

It is admitted by the bible writers themselves that the neighboring nations were much more powerful than "the chosen people," and that only by the daily

miraculous intervention of God could they cope with them at all, and that even then they were not always successful. The following text is quite significant :

And the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but *could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.**

We respectfully call Mr. Roosevelt's attention to this positive testimony to the superiority in equipment of the Gentiles to the Jews in bible times. Even the God of Israel was helpless against the *science* of the Gentile nations. He could throw down stones from heaven, or stop the sun and moon, or slay the first-born of Egypt, but against science, against human inventions, he could do nothing. Is it a sign of superiority to depend upon miracles for one's daily existence? Is it not rather a proof of the intellectual sterility of the people?

I am aware, of course, of the argument that Israel's superiority lay in its clearer moral visions. But why should a people morally superior to their neighbors be so mediocre in everything else? Is moral excellence prejudicial to national development? But it is not true that the Old Testament helped to make Israel morally superior to the heathen "round about them." It is to be regretted that the opposite of this is the truth. A few examples from the bible will be sufficient to support the thesis that the bible did even less for the moral development of Israel than it did for its intellectual and industrial expansion.

Abraham, one of the most "righteous" characters of the bible, twice trafficked in his wife's or sister's, honor, by selling her, the first time, to the King of

* Judges i, 19.

Egypt for sheep and oxen, asses and camels, and male and female slaves; he repeated the imposture by selling her a second time to Abimelech, King of Gerar, for more "sheep and oxen, and men servants and women servants." His son Isaac followed his father's example, and sold to the same Abimelech his wife, Rebekah. Compare now the behavior of the "heathen" Abimelech, with that of the bible saints. After Rebekah had been introduced to the king as an unmarried woman by her husband, Isaac, she was taken into his palace:

And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us.

And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.*

Which of these two characters was the more civilized? Though in daily communion with God and protected by miracles at every step, Isaac preferred to lie about his wife than to trust in God, and, like his father, Abraham, he enriched himself by her shame; while the "heathen" Abimelech, on the other hand, grieved at the thought of the wrong which the lying Isaac might have tempted his subjects to commit. And while not even David, another bible saint, ever thought of separating himself from the woman he had stolen by causing her husband to be shot, these "heathen" princes returned to Abraham and Isaac their wives.

* Genesis xxvi, 8-II.

Even Jehovah is compelled to pay a tribute to the "heathen" king:

And God said unto him (Abimelech) in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this *in the integrity of thy heart*; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

Now therefore restore the man his wife; *for he is a prophet*, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.*

This is a terribly incriminating admission for the deity to make. After paying a tribute to the "integrity" of Abimelech, and acknowledging his innocence, Jehovah threatens to kill him if he will not fall upon his knees before the mendacious Abraham, "for he is a prophet," and beg him to pray for his salvation. But there is not a word of censure for Abraham for lying about his wife or for keeping the price of her shame. Abraham was orthodox, and that covers up a multitude of sins — even to this day. Is it any wonder that educated Jews are deserting the synagogue?

In the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis we find another example of the superiority in morals of the neighboring nations to the children of Israel. One of the daughters of Israel "went out to see the daughters of the land." It is difficult to understand just why this young woman "went out" among the "heathen." At any rate, she was fair, and it was not long before she found a princely suitor. Just as Sarah and Rebekah were taken into the homes of the Gentiles, so was Leah, Jacob's daughter. The prince desired to retain her as his wife, and with this end in view he asked his royal father to get him "this damsel to wife." Then

* Genesis xx, 6-8.

←
DINAH ?

Hamor, the king, called upon Jacob to ask for the hand of his daughter in marriage to his son, Shechem. "The soul of my son Shechem," he said to Jacob, "longeth for thy daughter: I pray you to give her him to wife," and he enforced his plea for closer relations between Jews and Gentiles by the following sensible argument:

And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.*

The prince, too, following his father, pleaded with Jacob, to let him marry his daughter:

And Shechem said unto her father, and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.

Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.†

We will let the "holy" bible tell Mr. Roosevelt the rest of the story:

And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father *deceitfully*, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister:

And they said unto them, We can not do this thing, to give our sister to one that is *uncircumcised*; for that were a reproach unto us:

But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised;

Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son.

* Genesis xxxiv, 9, 10.

† Genesis xxxiv, 11, 12.

And the young man deferred not to do the thing because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: *and he was more honourable* than all the house of his father.*

"And he was more honorable." Is there an Old Testament character of whom it is written anywhere in the bible that he was "honorable"? But let us see how "honorable" the sons of Jacob were in this affair. After the Hivites had accepted the conditions, and were all circumcised, this is what happened:

And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.

They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field,

And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.†

Were the "inspired" sons of Jacob superior to their uninspired heathen neighbors? To marry a human being of another creed was to defile one's self. How can there be any brotherhood in the world with such a doctrine? That the bible God approved of these barbarities will be seen in the following story:

And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman

* Genesis xxxiv, 13-19.

† Genesis xxxiv, 25-29.

through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.*

Do men like Bryan and Roosevelt, who are representative men in America, know that there are scores of such stories in the Word of God? How do they excuse Jehovah for rewarding Phinehas for so shameful a crime? Why kill a man who has loved and married a Gentile? But to this day, the orthodox Jew sits on the floor and mourns for his son or daughter who has married a Gentile, as one mourns for the dead.

In what sense, then, is it true that "the Old Testament carried Israel far beyond the point any neighboring nation had then reached?"

Of course, as already explained, I do not believe the shameful things the bible relates about the Jewish people, but had Colonel Roosevelt read the bible carefully before writing about it; or had he taken the pains to acquaint himself with the results of higher criticism, as presented by Christian scholars themselves, he would never have rushed into his statement about the Old Testament carrying the Jews beyond any nation of antiquity. In his *Ancient Faiths*

* Numbers xxv, 6-13.

Embodied in Ancient Names, Dr. T. Inman, speaking on this same subject, says this :

Even the devil is not so black as he is painted; and however dark may be the crimes of the ancient Jews, the historian is bound to ascertain whether there are not some bright spots in the vast pall of evil deeds that spreads over their history. Yet to me the task is hopeless; I can not find one single redeeming trait in the national character of the ancient Hebrews. It is difficult to find a people in the olden times, whereof we have a history, who were not superior to the necks shall be your footstools.

The same scholar sums up the commandments, exhortations, ordinances and revelations of the authors of the Old Testament, and finds their burden to be this :

Keep yourselves to yourselves, and to the God whom we preach; shun your neighbors, hate them, and, when you can, plunder and kill them. Agree among yourselves and treat your priests well, and then you shall be great and glorious, princes, kings and potentates in every land, and your enemies' necks shall be your footstools.*

It is very much safer for a public man to denounce the trusts than to read and tell the truth about the bible. Mr. Roosevelt has only made an assertion about the value of the Old Testament to the Jews. But an assertion is not an argument. We respectfully call Mr. Roosevelt's attention to the opinion which Jehovah, himself, held of his own people, which will settle the question of whether or not the bible helped to make the Jews better than their neighbors :

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: *but I found none.*†

* Vol. II, page 334.

† Inman, Vol. II, page 335.

‡ Ezekiel xxii, 30.

III.

"Let Them Produce It"

PRODUCE a book like the bible," is the oft-repeated challenge addressed to the critics of the book. It is impossible to produce a book like the bible, without copying it. Another bible, exactly like the one we now have, could only be had by making the second a duplicate of the first. There is no other way of reproducing a book. We can no more reproduce the bible than we can the "Arabian Nights," or Shakespeare. In fact, no two things in nature are exactly alike. Men differ from one another, even as do books. Another Socrates, or another Napoleon, or another Lincoln, would be an impossibility. It is equally out of the question to have another Nero, Constantine, or Pope Alexander VI.

To ask us to produce a book like the bible is as unreasonable as to ask us to produce another Koran, or another Mahomet. If the new Koran be like the old, no addition, or improvement has been made to religious literature by its production; if the new Koran be different from the old, then it is not a reproduction. "Let them produce it!" sounds pompous enough, but it is all noise and rattle.

In a private letter to an inquirer, to whom I am indebted for the quotation I am about to make, Mr. W. J. Bryan, referring to the author of this book, asks, "If Mr. Mangasarian has books better than the bible, there is nothing to prevent his presenting them to the public, and driving the bible out of use." But that is precisely what is being done. The bible has

been, a step at a time, driven completely out of use in the halls of learning. It is no longer an authority, for example, on questions of science—geology, astronomy, chemistry, biology and all the other branches of one of the principal pursuits of man. Better books on these subjects have replaced the “Word of God.” What is true of science is true of history, politics, government, education, commerce; in all these departments and activities of life better books have relegated the bible into the background.

Did the framers of the American Constitution, for instance, which Gladstone calls “the proudest product of the pen and brain” of man, consult the bible for their work? Did they borrow the doctrine of the separation of Church and State from the bible? The Church in the bible dominates the State; but the Americans compelled the Church to take its hands off the State. Did they learn that lesson from the bible? The Constitution, again, declares that all power is derived from the consent of the governed. Is that biblical? Does not the “Word of God” plainly teach that “the powers that be are appointed of God,” and that not to obey the powers thus appointed, whether they be good or evil, is to receive “damnation to their souls”? Evidently, then, the makers of America had better books than the bible to be guided by.

Where again, is it permitted in the bible to tolerate all religions and to favor none? If there is any one idea more prominent than any other in the bible, it is that the religion which it announces is alone true, and that all the others are pernicious, and to be suppressed by fire and the sword. And religious tolerance is one of the glories of the American Constitution. Where

did they get that idea? From better books than the bible.

It is not our aim to *drive* the bible out of use, but to acquaint people with its real nature. Too long has it been wound about the faculties of the human mind like a "holy" chain. It is its tyranny that is attacked. It is the forbidding and misleading labels which the priesthood has placed upon it, which we wish to remove. It is the bible as a *fetish*, or as the *best* book, or as a weapon of persecution, that we wish to overthrow.

But if the bible is not divine, we are asked again, how explain the fact that despite all the attacks of all the ages, it is still loved and cherished by so many? We might as well ask, "If the bible is divine, how is it that in spite of all the things done to bolster it up, there are still so many who do not believe in it?" If long life and popularity prove the bible true, they ought to prove the Chinese and the Hindu bibles true, too. Is a man right because he is old, or is he wrong because he is young? Is truth to be decided by counting beans, as Socrates would ask? If it is majorities or age that counts, then Christianity must have been false when it was new, and counted only a handful of followers.

And then, there is the question, "What will you give us in place of the bible?" We can not take anything away from you which you can keep. And if you can not keep the bible, you have to let it go, whether or not you can find another to take its place. But are there not better stories in the world than those of the serpent in Eden; the fall of man; the deluge and the drowning of the human race; the ten plagues of Egypt; the talking ass; the whale that swallowed

a man, and of the innumerable wars and massacres? Is it true that the foolish rites and ceremonies, and the unintelligible trinities, incarnations and resurrections in the bible can not be matched? Are we really worrying that, if we give up these tales and mysteries, we will not be able to find anything to replace them?

If we desire fairy stories, there is the mythology of the Greeks; if we want miracles, there is science with its real wonders; if we want tales of human adventure and heroism, there is history, ancient and modern; if we want biography, better than the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the story of the glorious discoverers and inventors whose genius transmuted human ignorance into knowledge and barbarism into civilization. And for the sufferings of the gods, read the story of the martyrdom of man!

What Is the Best Thing That Can Be Said in Favor of the Bible?

LET us put in the mouth of the defenders of the bible the strongest, the most convincing and the most plausible arguments imaginable. Nothing is gained by denying to our adversary a fair chance. Who cares to measure swords with a shadow?

I. "The bible ought to be judged by its fruits," is one of the most commended arguments in its favor. It is claimed that civilization, with all its blessings, is the gift of the bible. If this were true, it could not prove the bible inspired. The inventors of steam, the mariner's compass, and the printing-press have con-

tributed much to human progress, but would that prove that they were inspired? The writings of Socrates and Aristotle greatly aided the development of Europe, as the wars of Alexander the Great helped to educate all Asia. But does that make Greek literature, or Alexander's wars, inspired?

But it is not true that civilization is the exclusive gift of the bible. There was a civilization, in many respects fairer than ours, in Rome and in Greece, without the bible; while in *Christian Abyssinia* there is no civilization to-day to speak of. If the bible is the only civilizer, the Jews should have been in advance of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans. If the bible is the sole civilizing force, how explain the Dark Ages, when there was no other book that was even allowed to be named which did not agree with the bible?

II. The next "best" argument in favor of the bible is that it gives the world the only information on God, the soul, the origin of man, his destiny, life beyond death, and the mysteries of Revelation. But what is the information worth? Is its account of the creation of man and of the universe out of nothing, and the creation of woman out of a rib, believable? Is the portrait of God, as given in the bible, acceptable? And as to the beyond, does the bible throw any more light on the question than the older or newer theosophic books?

III. A third "best" argument is that the bible presents the highest morality and the noblest ideals ever known by man. What are they? Did the bible discover morality? Was selfishness, or theft, or murder, or meanness, a virtue before the bible forbade

them? Was there no love of one's neighbor, love of one's country, or nobody to practice charity, or justice, in the world before Moses or Jesus? But it is not true that the bible teaches the highest morality; on the contrary, as this book undertakes to show, morality is the least of all the anxieties of the bible. According to its teaching, *belief* comes first; and all the morality in the world, we are told, can not save the man who will not *believe*.

IV. Another plea made in behalf of the bible is that it has comforted thousands and reformed some of the worst characters. "I have the witness of the spirit in me," argues the convert, "that the bible is the 'Word of God.'" And he proceeds to relate how he was downcast, or fallen in sin, and the bible made a new man of him. We rejoice whenever the disconsolate find cheer or the fallen arise. Nor is our happiness diminished in the least when we are told that it was the bible which worked the change. Whoever dries a tear upon the eyelid of sorrow, and whatever the force which lifts the fallen to their feet, deserves the gratitude of man. But if that proves the bible divine, why are there so many who are not comforted, or so many of the fallen who do not rise at all? An infallible book should save more people than the bible is claimed to do. The greater part of Christendom, not to speak of the rest of the world, is still to be saved. If the bible only saves some, so does education and other purely human agencies; and if education does not save everybody, neither does the bible. Wherein, then, is the superiority of the "divine" to the human?

Moreover, if a man is comforted by reading Shakes-

peare, or Goethe, or Emerson, or George Eliot, would that prove these authors inspired? Or, if a sick man is made better by exercise, or medical attention, and a bad man becomes good by a change of environment, would it follow that these agencies were divine? If the bible is not the only power that can help, then it is but one of many agencies, and why should one of the many agencies which make for improvement be labeled "divine" ?

Nor does the plea that, because "I feel it in my heart that the bible is divine," make it so. If "I feel it in my heart" were enough to prove anything true, other bibles would be as true as ours. The Turk and the Chinaman "feel it" in their hearts about their gods as we do about ours. The argument from *feeling* practically dispenses with knowledge, and leads to intellectual nihilism.

V. In defense of the bible it is further urged that, it being "a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel," allowance should be made for the unavoidable imperfections which have crept into its pages. God was the author, man was the amanuensis, they say, and, therefore, the defects of the bible should be charged to the account of man. But why should a heavenly treasure be enclosed in an earthen vessel? Are there no heavenly vessels? Was not Jesus as divine as his father? Why could not he have committed the revelation to writing? Why leave it to unknown and unreliable reporters to transcribe a divine message? If the reporters were not unreliable, then what is the complaint? But if reliable reporters could not be found, the deity could just as easily, and very much more safely, have written the whole of his message with his

own hand. Besides, a heavenly treasure which an earthen vessel can spoil is not very heavenly. If the incorruptible can be corrupted, then it is not any different from any other corruptible thing. Alas! for the infallible book which has to be protected against printers' or revisers' mistakes. Let us have a better bible — one that no earthen vessel can contaminate.

VI. Finally, "Why not dwell upon the truths in the bible and let alone the errors?" is another of the "strong arguments" of the bible defenders. "There are truths enough in the bible, and to spare," say they. "Why, then, waste time on its imperfections?" But it all depends upon how serious the imperfections are. It is not the number of errors, but their importance that counts. One serious blemish in a book would be enough to condemn the whole book. The strength of a chain is in its weakest link. It is no comfort to think that there are many more sound links in the chain than weak ones. When the defects in the bible are pointed out, it is no answer to say that many, or even most, of its parts are all right. But this leads us to the next important question.

IV.

How to Test a Book

THE character of a book is determined not by its best, but by its worst parts. This sounds paradoxical, but let us see if it is not true. The bulk of a book may be composed of harmless and even of wholesome matter, but if there is in it even half a page of questionable teaching, the book becomes unsafe. One

may write magnificently of liberty and the rights of man, for instance, but if anywhere in the book, even though only for once, assassination be recommended as a political weapon, that one idea would give to the whole work a dangerous tendency. Indeed, the good parts of such a book, if anything, add to the mischief it might do, because they help to give it an air of respectability. In the same way, a comedy, or a drama, may be perfectly proper in nearly all its parts, but if it offends good taste, or attacks morality in a single line, the play is bad. One indelicate scene in a production will bring upon its author the just condemnation of the public. Likewise, a novel may be crowded with helpful philosophical reflections, but the least vulgarity in it would make the book a menace.

We are not taking the position that such books or plays should never be read or acted, but that they should never be given an *unqualified* endorsement. The bible is given an unqualified endorsement. To deserve it, it ought not only to be good in the main, but good altogether. We shall see if the bible is good even in the main; but before we take up that phase of the subject let me give you a few more illustrations to show that it is not true of the bible only that its worst parts determine its character, but also of the men in it who are held up for our emulation. If any one of our physical organs is in an unhealthy or perilous condition, the health of the whole body is in question. The soundness of all our other parts can not excuse the alarming symptoms of the affected organ. The insurance companies will reject our application if, though perfectly well in all our other organs, we are seriously affected in any one of them.

By the same rule is measured a man's intellectual parts. It is not the thousand sensible things a man says, but the one absurd or impossible statement he advances which gives us the gauge of his intellect. To the objection that the rule which we have been applying would do a great injustice if applied to such a man as Alfred Russel Wallace, for instance, who though an eminent scientist, and the rival of Charles Darwin, was also a firm believer in spiritualism, the answer is that the example cited proves the inadvisability of endorsing any book or man, unqualifiedly. Only an infallible book, or an infallible man, could command such endorsement. The bible, therefore, must be perfect in everything, else its unqualified endorsement by the clergy is a real danger.

But not only the physical and the intellectual, but also the moral character of a man is ascertained by this rule. One act of treachery or murder is enough to put a man behind the bars. Before such a man may be restored to society he must reform, and, likewise, before a book may be given full endorsement, the objectionable and the absurd must be eliminated therefrom. In the same way, before any man could be held up as a perfect example, he must be above the charge of even a single serious defect. If you would have your play staged, cut out the offending lines; if you would have your bible read in the home and the school, and the characters therein depicted, admired and followed, cut out the scandalous stories and the immoral teachings it contains. You will not do this? Then both science and morality have the right to condemn your book, and forbid its use in the public schools, by the help of the courts. We hope that in the near

future the civilized world will avail itself of this right, by taking steps to render the bible as harmless in church and Sunday-school as it now is in the public schools. This can be done by breaking down the *unqualified endorsement* which the sectarian interests of the country have given the book. Unveil the bible! and its glamour will vanish.

The most telling proofs in favor of the Rationalist position on the bible are the admissions which, from time to time, the defenders of the bible themselves make. The editors of the *Oberlin College Magazine*, which is a religious publication, in an article on "Bible Hero Classics," suggest that parts of the bible should be excluded from the mails:

Modern scholarship has so changed the point of view with which the bible is regarded, that one no longer has the confidence, in sending the "seeker after God" to the bible to believe that he will certainly find Him there. The Old Testament is a complete literature with units of varying value. Much of it is incomprehensible to the ordinary reader. Parts of it should be excluded from the mails.

Prof. Dr. Charles Henderson, the chaplain of the University of Chicago, expresses his utter contempt for certain parts of the bible: "John the Baptist's God was no better than our devil. The things which made Solomon and David saints in their own day would land them in the penitentiary in ours."*

The bible quotes God as saying that David was a man after His own heart, but this divine tells us David was a criminal. Could a more damaging admission be made by a clergyman? And yet the book that can mistake a scoundrel for a saint is to be placed in the hands of our children at a very tender age, and foisted

* Reported in the *Tribune*, Chicago.

upon the whole nation as "the sublimest of books," to quote the words of another divine.* A book concerning which its own friends can hold such diametrically opposite opinions can not be, at least, a very *honest* book. Honest people speak or write to be understood. If what one reader of the bible calls God, another calls the devil; or if to one reader David is a great saint, while to another he is only a scamp, deserving a long term in jail, then, surely, either we can not understand the bible, in which case the book is worthless; or the bible was not meant to be understood, which leads to the same conclusion.

The Rev. J. Biresley, writing in the *Christian World*, pays, unconsciously, a great tribute to the Rationalist: "More than thirty years ago I listened to a lecture by Charles Bradlaugh on 'Is the Bible True'? His assertions shocked the orthodox among his hearers, and yet there was scarcely one of them which the biblical students of to-day would not accept." What a compliment this is to the courage of the Rationalist. He dared to shock the orthodox at a time when they had the power to persecute him unto death. And what an admission this is, of the intellectual and moral superiority of the heretic to the believer! It takes "thirty years" of dilly-dallying before Christian scholars will admit that the persecuted heretic was in the right. Is it any wonder that the world is losing respect for priest and preacher and honoring the heretics as the pioneers of the golden day of truth?

To the churches we say: "If you would save the

* Editor *Sunday School Times*.

bible, separate the good from the bad, and the false from the true. Do not print them all in one volume as the 'Holy Bible.' If you have not the courage to call any part of the bible bad, or any of its statements false — we shall do it for you."

Speak According to Knowledge

THERE are also *good* things in the bible. It would be regrettable, indeed, to believe it possible for a book of the size of the bible to be wholly bad. Literature is life; and it would be as impossible to find a people with a literature wholly bad, as it would be to find a people with an infallible literature. Together with the *Vedas* of India, the *Avesta* of the Parsees, the *Five Kings* of the Chinese, the Buddhist *Tri Pitikes*, and the Moslem *Koran*, the Jewish-Christian scriptures contain many splendid passages.

In all ancient literature we run across bits of fine poetry and eloquence. It would really be impossible to collect all the literature of a people, of whatever race or period in history, into one volume, without finding in the collection many a precious gem. The cry of a man in distress is always touching, be he Jew or Hindu. The love of man for home and fatherland, for wife and child, for truth and freedom, in any book, is sublime. Friendship is the one rose without a thorn, wherever it blooms. A melody does not have to be inspired, to be sung in all lands. We weep for the sufferings of a savage of ten thousand years ago, and we laugh with the men of wit and humor of every race and clime. We have no prejudice against the

bible. All we demand is the liberty to read it as we do any other literature: To enjoy what is noble and inspiring in it, and to reject what is false and degrading. It is the object of our efforts to make it perfectly proper, as well as safe, for any one to read and tell the truth about the bible. No man shall be compelled to agree with it upon penalty of losing his standing in the community now, or his "soul" in the hereafter.

In comparing one book with another, we must bear in mind that it is not the ideas in which they agree, but those in which they disagree, that justifies their existence. All the seven bibles of the world* forbid crime and recommend the virtues. Are they, then, all equally worthy? If the important thing is sameness of teaching, why is not one bible enough? But there are many bibles, because it is the differences that preserve, as well as distinguish, one book from another. We would never be able to tell wherein the bible of Confucius was superior to the Moslem *Koran*, or the *Koran* to the *Avesta* of Zoroaster, or again, the book of science to the creeds, if we confined our investigations to the things held in common by them all. It is by the things in which they *disagree* that their real character is revealed.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor" is in all the bibles, but "Speak according to knowledge" is not in any of the bibles—it is found only in the bible of science, and that is the difference between religion, which builds on *faith*, and science, which builds on *knowledge*.

* The seven bibles of the world are the *Koran* of the Mohammedans, the *Tri Pitikes* of Buddhists, the *Five Kings* of the Chinese, the three *Vedas* of the Hindus, the *Zend Avesta* of the Persians, the *Eddas* of Scandinavia, and *Old and New Testaments* of the Christians.

In this one difference is the glory of science, a glory which is not shared by any of the sectarian bibles of the world.

"Speak according to *knowledge*," and "*Speak* according to knowledge." That is to say, "Let your tongue keep pace with your mind," are the two commandments for which one looks in vain in the Jewish-Christian bible. Neither Moses nor Jesus ever thought of commanding, or at least of permitting, people to confine their statements and beliefs to the facts — of never dogmatizing about the unknown, which vice has converted the world into a babel of discord, hatred and persecution. Never did either of these teachers think of inculcating so sweet, so sane, so wholesome, so modest, so reverent, so peaceful, a command as is expressed in the caution which science has posted up at every turn of the road: *Speak according to knowledge*.

Nor does the bible allow people to *speak* their true thoughts. Could any book be guilty of a greater offense against the highest ethics? All the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount can not make up for this failure of the bible to encourage, yea, and to command, in unmistakably plain and persuasive language, liberty of thought and speech as the only guarantee of honesty in religion, and as the only enemy which falsehood fears. On the other hand, how can any book be called good, much less the best, in all the world, which contains such a passage as the following:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

* Mark xvi, 16.

Can freedom and the bible live under the same roof? Would it be safe to *speak* according to knowledge, when "damnation" is the penalty for so doing? Was it to encourage honesty, liberty of conscience and tolerance that so Asiatic and despotic a command as the above has been translated into all the languages of the earth? Would not the bible have been a more helpful book if it had said: "Do not believe upon insufficient evidence, for to do so is to prefer error to truth"? But there is not a single bible that contains so daring a commandment. If a man may not "Speak according to knowledge," he can not act according to conscience, and a religion which denies to us these two rights instead of saving us, destroys us body and soul.

The only difference, in respect to freedom of worship, between the New Testament and the Old is that, while the New Testament postpones the punishment of the *free thinker* until the day of judgment, the Old Testament proceeds to "damn" him here and now:

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; *neither shall thine eye pity him*, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die.*

It brings tears into my eyes to think of Europe and America upon their knees, with blanched cheeks and trembling lips, before such a text. Why retain so unjust and tyrannical a commandment in a book which the people are asked to love and obey? And why

* Deuteronomy xiii, 6-10.

translate such evil words into all the tongues of man? What has happened to the European races — to the descendants of the glorious Greeks and the proud Romans — that they can fawn over a book that commands a mother to kill her child for not believing as she does? Surely a blight of some kind must have fallen upon both the heart and intellect of the Western world — else how explain the gilt-edged bibles, containing these inhuman texts by the score, which young and old carry in their pockets, and almost worship?

But the full import of this text is in the words we have printed in italics: "*Neither shall thine eye pity him.*" It seems as though the being who gave the commandment feared that the natural affections might lead fathers or mothers to hesitate dipping their hands in the blood of their own sons and daughters; hence, the imperative, "*Neither shall thine eye pity him.*" Yes, the heart must turn into a stone, even as the head must be stunned, before anyone can be a good Jew or a good Christian.

PART III.

I.

The First Chapter of the Bible

MUCH depends upon what impression the first chapter produces upon our minds. If we find the statements therein contained accurate, precise, reasonable, original, of course, that fact will dispose us very favorably toward the remainder of the book; but if, on the other hand, the first chapter should appear to us as fantastical, fictitious, legendary, contradictory, grotesque—made up of gossip borrowed from here and there—naturally, we will be prejudiced against the chapters which follow. If the first chapter is not true, the credit of the book will certainly suffer. We may read the rest of the book as literature, or from curiosity, but as the word of God — no!

Curious, is it not, that there is not a Christian scholar, or a university man, who does not admit that the opening chapter of the bible is legendary, that is to say, not true. Sir Oliver Lodge, who is one of the champions of the church, in his reply to Professor Haeckel, refers to the first chapter as “the old Genesis *legend*.” Canon Farrar, who was a shining light in the Anglican church, calls this same chapter an *allegory*, that is to say, a fable. And the scholarly authors of the *Encyclopedia Biblica* do not hesitate to deal with the story of the creation in Genesis as mere gossip, borrowed from Assyrian and Babylonian sources.

There is hardly a single educated Christian who accepts the first chapter of the bible as anything more than tradition or fiction.

The dean of the University of Chicago, who is a Baptist clergyman, recently said this in public print: "It is irreligious to teach that the world was made in six days, when we know that it was not." But the first chapter of the bible teaches that untruth, and for two thousand years the churches, according to this Christian professor, have taught what is not true. In the Ten Commandments, supposed to have been given by God himself, and which are still read in all the churches, we are ordered to keep the seventh day holy, "for in *six days* the Lord made the heaven and the earth, etc." Yet, this Christian professor says this is not true. What is still more puzzling is that this same professor who condemns the *first* chapter as erroneous, accepts the second, or the third, or the tenth, as the word of God! Even more astonishing than this is the conduct of the religious teachers who from Monday to Saturday believe in the scientific doctrine of evolution, but on Sunday repeat with the *Westminster Catechism* that "In six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth." What shall we think of a religion that can make people so callous as that?

Of course, a book or a man may make a number of statements of which some are true and some are not, but the man or the book that makes statements of which some are true and some false ceases to be different from any other book or man. The position of the orthodox preachers, that the bible is infallible from cover to cover, is very much more consistent than the position of the Christian professor we have quoted,

who says that the first chapter of the bible is not the word of God, but the second or the fifth is. No. If the first chapter of your "holy" book is not divine, the whole book is human.

But to state, as these Christian scholars do, that what the bible says in its first chapter is not true, is to make a very serious admission. If Genesis is a legend, Jesus might be a legend, too, for both Genesis and Jesus are in the same "holy" book. If the bible is unreliable when it says the world was created, it may be equally unreliable when it says Christ was incarnated. If it is not true that the universe was made in six days, it may not be true either that Christ rose from the grave. Our evidence for either statement is the bible. If the story of the fall of man is a myth, the story of the "Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world," may also be a myth. You can not part with Genesis and keep Jesus. The moment a single stone is removed from the structure of supernaturalism, the safety of the whole building is threatened. The tragedy of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is inseparably related to the tragedy of a dying god on Calvary. Christ is supposed to have shed his blood because Adam's sin had brought a curse upon the whole human race; and if Adam is a myth, what becomes of Christ?

The First Verse of the Bible

BUT let us read the first verse of the first chapter:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Indeed! The text could not be more childish if it read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the moon." Is not the moon, or the earth, a very small part of "the heaven" and included therein? Why separate the earth, or the moon, from the rest of the universe? How would it sound to say: "In the beginning God created the earth and the Sandwich Islands?" or "the earth and a grain of sand"? But our next comment will show that if the writer of this first verse of the first chapter of the bible was pitifully ignorant of his subject, the translator of it was even worse than ignorant — he was, I am sorry to say, also a falsifier.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

I hold my breath! The very first verse shows deliberate manipulation and tampering with the text. The Hebrew word which has been rendered into English as "God," is "Elohim," which means *gods*, not God. The singular of Elohim is Eloah — *the dreaded one*. But the Hebrew text reads Elohim, not Eloah, that is to say, the plural and not the singular form is used. Had the translators of the bible been free from sectarian prejudices, the first verse in the bible would have read: "In beginning (not in *the* beginning) the gods created the heaven and the earth." But the priesthood, which had the bible in its custody, desired

to prove by it the dogma of *monotheism*. Yet, the first verse of the first chapter of the bible *proved* polytheism — more than one god. Whereupon, the translators quietly dropped the letter “s” from the word gods, and made it to read God, thereby suppressing the fact that the supposed inspired writer of the opening chapter of the book was a Pagan, with more gods than the translators themselves believed in. It does not require much effort to see what the consequences would have been had the first verse of the bible been truthfully rendered into the modern tongues. “In beginning the gods created the heaven and the earth” might have relegated the bible to the limbo of other mythological compositions. “The gods” would have made the exclusiveness of Christianity or Judaism impossible. The history of European religions would have been different had not that one letter “s” in the first verse of the first chapter of the bible, and the very first time the deity is mentioned, been *killed* by the translators. Of course, finding manipulation in the very first verse, we will begin to suspect that other texts, too, have been “doctored.”

The very name of the book — *Holy Bible* — shows manipulation. By what, or by whose, authority is the book called “holy”? It is nowhere stated in any of the manuscripts translated that the writings are “holy.” The words *Holy Bible*, then, represent nothing more than the opinion or guess, or, at best, the judgment, of the English translators of the book.

But there is a more serious example of manipulation on the title-page of the Bible. Instead of admitting that the translation has been made from Hebrew and Greek copies, not originals, for there are no orig-

inals (and, therefore, there is no way of telling how true the copies are, since they can not be compared with the originals), the words

Translated out of the original Greek is inserted on the title-page of the New Testament. This, I am compelled to say, is an indefensible misstatement. The truth is that the originals, if they ever existed, are lost. The bible as we have it is not quite two hundred and fifty years old, and the most ancient manuscript in existence of the Old Testament is not a thousand years old. This is the *Codex Petropolitanus*, which is in the library of St. Petersburg. But where are the originals? Why were they lost? Why were they "inspired" if they were not to be preserved? But how can men who do not hesitate to state in print that they possess the "original Greek" of the New Testament when they do not and never have possessed it, pose as the moral teachers of the world? If the translators of the bible wished to confine themselves to the truth, instead of saying "Translated out of the original Greek, which is not so, they would have said this on the title-page of their work:

A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS
OF UNKNOWN DATE AND AUTHORSHIP,
RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
FROM SUPPOSED COPIES OF SUPPOSED ORIGINALS
UNFORTUNATELY LOST.

Rev. T. K. Cheyne, who is one of the contributors to the most scholarly work recently produced by churchmen,* gives a number of instances of deliberate manipulation of bible texts by the translators. "The Old Testament," he writes, is not altogether in its orig-

* *The Encyclopedia Biblica.*

inal form ; it has undergone not merely corruption, but editorial manipulation. This is plainer in some books than in others ; but nowhere, perhaps, is it more manifest than in the Psalter." Two of his examples of mistranslation are from the twenty-ninth psalm :

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

1. Give thanks unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.

2. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

Ascribe unto Yahwe, O ye sons of Jerahmeel,

Ascribe unto Yahwe glory and strength.

Ascribe glory, O ye Ishmaelites, unto Yahwe,

Worship Yahwe, Rehoboth and Cush.

Compare also the first verse of the one hundred and thirty-ninth psalm with its literal translation as given by Doctor Cheyne :

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

1. O Lord thou hast searched me, and known me.

2. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

O Yahwe ! thou hast rooted up Zarephath,

It is thou that hast cut down Maacath ;

Ashhur and Arabia thou hast scattered.

All Jerahmeel thou hast subdued.

But one of the worst cases of tampering with "inspired" texts is to be found in the New Testament. For nearly two thousand years the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the first epistle of St. John has been saying this : "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one."

You may look high and low for that text in the Revised Version, but you will not be able to find it there. That text has slipped out of, or has been spirited away from, the bible, *revised*. After twenty centuries of time, the forgery blushes to look criticism in the

face. The smuggled text for the trinity is still in the King James' bible, but the best scholarship of the church, at least, is ashamed of it, and has dropped it. What confidence can be placed upon men who wait for twenty hundred years before they will admit that what the Rationalist has been saying right along about the bible being a medley (to which from time to time the sects made such additions as suited their interests or from which they dropped whatever was prejudicial to their claims) is really true.

But let us return to the first verse of the bible: It is evident that the writer of that verse believed in more than one god. This is shown by other references to the subject in the same chapter. He makes Elohim, or the gods, say, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." Still another text reads: "Behold the man has become as one of *us*," which is also in keeping with the "gods" who created the heaven and the earth.

In reply to this criticism, it has been argued that the "we" or the "us" and the "our" in this part of the bible prove the doctrine of the trinity. The Catholic bible, in a footnote, plainly says so. Evidently, John Milton was of the same opinion, for in *Paradise Lost* he says:

. . . Therefore the omnipotent
Eternal father — thus to his Son audibly spake:
Let us make now man in our image . . . *

But why should the words "us" and "our" prove that there are only *three* persons in the Godhead? Why may not "we" mean four, or forty? Why only three? It is really childish to see in "gods," or in "we," a proof of only three gods, and no more.

* *Paradise Lost*, book VII.

Besides, the members of the trinity are all supposed to belong to the male sex; but the "gods" in Genesis say that they created man in their image, "male and female," the implication being that there were female as well as male gods in the "we" of the first chapter of the bible. This argument failing, the defenders of the bible make a second attempt to explain away the letter "s" in gods: The writer of the first chapter of the bible, they argue, wrote the plural form out of respect to the deity. He used the "royal style" of speaking to express his veneration. But if "gods" in the plural is the respectful title of the deity, why did the translators use the disrespectful singular in English? Why did they drop the plural for the singular in the translation? Or is it only in Hebrew that the "royal style" must be observed? And is it conceivable that a God who elsewhere in the bible says "I" — "I am a jealous God," and "I only am God," and "there is none other beside me" — would here, and in the very first chapter, and on a most important subject, say "*we* gods" created "the heaven and the earth"?

There is no better way to prove the weakness of a cause than by trying to uphold it by equivocal arguments. Men would never be arguing that "we" means the trinity, or that it is the "royal style," etc., if they had more cogent arguments to advance. It is only when we are hard pressed that we resort to sophistry.

But let us read the second verse:

The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Honestly, it is impossible to get any intelligible

meaning out of such a sentence. The earth was without *form*? Was not the form of our globe the same in the beginning as it is now? Can there be anything without a form of some kind? The revisers of the authorized version of the bible, wishing to remedy this ignorant statement, have dropped the word *form*, and substituted in its place the word *waste*: "The earth was waste and void." But "waste" and "void" mean practically the same thing. The revisers have simply refused to translate the word which means "without form." Of course, the revised version is not read in all the churches; and in the authorized version, "the earth is without form." This meaningless text has been made to support the idea that at one time there was only chaos, out of which the creator evolved cosmos. Science, however, has shown that nature was never in a state of chaos. The laws of matter are the same to-day, and will be the same to-morrow — and they have never been different. The law of gravitation, for instance, was as potent and inevitable when the earth was younger as it is now. There was just as much order, or to put it differently, nature was as orderly a billion years ago as she is to-day. Everything happened according to the inherent properties of matter and force then, as now, and as it will happen to-morrow and forever. Chaos, then, is a figment of the theological mind. To provide God with something to do, a chaos was invented, which had to be tamed into a cosmos to keep the deity occupied.

But the text proceeds to inform us that "darkness was upon the face of the deep." This can not mean that the land itself was in the light; it must mean that the entire earth, land and sea, were wrapped up in

darkness. All we have, then, in the beginning, is *darkness*, and God's spirit moving about in the darkness. What a beginning! If God is light, as we are told elsewhere in the bible, how could there be darkness where he lived and moved about? God in the dark! or, God and the darkness! The unknown! It is this Darkness which men have called God! And is it not significant that because of this early association with darkness, the gods have always preferred it to the light. In First Kings, sixth chapter, fourth verse, we read that Solomon in building his temple "made windows of *narrow* lights." The house was meant to be the dwelling place of God, and care was taken to shut out the light, except what slipped in through *narrow* windows. Modern church buildings show the same prejudice against the light. God feels at home in the darkness! That was his first home — when he moved about in the universal night. It is also plainly stated in the bible that God prefers darkness for his abode.

The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.*

God! Darkness! They are joined together and no man has ever been able to put them asunder.

But let us read on:

And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.

Was that the first time the deity saw the light? Did he not know before this that the light was good? If he really had been moving over the face of the waters in total darkness for *æons*, who could blame him for calling the light good? After he saw that the light was

* I Kings viii, 12.

good, he divided it from the darkness, and he called the light day, and the darkness he called night, "and the evening and the morning were the first day." We have now day and night — evening and morning; but we have as yet no sun. Indeed, the sun is not created until the fourth day. How could there be light without the sun? And why create a sun if light could be had without it? The earth is in darkness or in the light according to its relative position to the sun. By its revolution on its axis the earth presents an ever shifting surface to the sun. The earth's movements are caused by two contrary forces, the centripetal and the centrifugal — the one tossing the earth like a ball into infinite space, and the other tugging it toward the sun. The equilibrium of these forces marks the diurnal course of the earth. Without the sun there would be no revolution of the earth, and if the earth stood still, there could be neither evening nor morning. And yet this verse states there was day and night, morning and evening, before there was any sun. The idea that the world is a progressive body, with the reins in the grip of those two forces, the centrifugal and the centripetal, whipping her on, and yet never letting her for a moment, even, to step out of the celestial race-course, never entered the puny and prosaic minds of myth-makers. Is there any reason why we should accept so impossible an explanation of the origin of the universe, or of the relation of the earth to the sun, when we have within our reach the stupendous revelations of science?

The creation of the sun, like the creation of the woman, seems to have been an afterthought. Not only was there both light and darkness — a day and a night — before there was any sun, but the sunless light was

also strong enough to produce vegetation, for the bible states that herbs and trees appeared and flourished on the third day; that is to say, vegetation arrived twenty-four hours before the sun. Not only does the bible speak of the stars as if they were thrown in, "He made the stars also," but the sun seems to have been thrown in, too — just as a grocer weighing beans tosses into the already loaded scales a few additional ones.

"The sun was made to give light upon the earth," say the Scriptures. But the earth was already lit up by the "Let there be light, and there was light," of the deity. The grass grew and the trees bore fruit after their kind without any help whatever from the sun. But an excuse must be provided for the existence of the sun: it was made "to give light upon the earth." It never occurred to the infallible writer that the sun, being one million five hundred thousand times bigger than the earth, would give more light than the earth could use. What would we say to the wisdom of creating a million million candle-power electric flame to light a molecule of dust? Yet, not only the sun which is fifteen hundred thousand times bigger than ourselves, but also the stars which are many times bigger than the sun, and of which there are an infinite number, were all created to dance attendance on this tiny dewdrop of a world, trembling in infinite space. The man who originated this gossip about sun and stars thought the firmament was a solid roof, just about so large and so far from the earth. It was made of hammered plate, and was equipped with windows which opened and shut, to let out or to stop the rain. The stars, sun and moon were fastened to this upper roof

and worked to and fro "like sliding panels." Is it possible that people find this infantile story of earth and sky inspiring? And is it not a pity that we Americans, in this twentieth century, lack both the courage and the frankness to speak our minds freely on the bible? If this Asiatic book has done no other harm than to seal the lips of science from fear, it has done enough to deserve all the criticisms that Rationalism has leveled against it.

Theologians Discover That Six Days Means Six Periods

THE defenders of the first chapter of the bible, in their attempt to reconcile theology with science, have advanced the theory that the "six days" of creation, instead of meaning six natural days of twenty-four hours, means six indefinite periods of time. The object of this explanation is to give the deity sufficient time to build his universe in, and so bring the story of theology and science into something like harmony. Of course, "six" meant six, and "days" meant days for nearly two thousand years, and there was no idea of ever changing the meaning of these words until the voice of Charles Darwin was heard in the world. Then in haste the clergy, too, made a "great" discovery. Darwin discovered the law of evolution; the clergy discovered that "six days" in the bible means six *æons*, or eras of large proportions.

There is a semblance of truth in this contention of the theologians. When, for example, we say in Washington's day, we mean, the century, or the times Wash-

ington lived in. Or when we say "in the day of the Lord" we do not mean a day of twenty-four hours, but a long and indefinite period of time. But this defense breaks down completely when it is remembered that the bible positively states the *number* of days required to make the world in. One day of indefinite duration would have been enough if *time* were what God needed. Why "six" indefinite times? The "six" before the word days is unanswerable proof that the "inspired" writer meant just six days and nothing more. When the *number* of days required for any purpose is stated, "days" can only mean one thing. If we say Washington crossed the Delaware and drove the English out of the State in "six days," there is absolutely no way of making the "six days" mean anything else than six days. The number "six" is fatal to the theological theory that days means eras. God was for *forty* days on Mount Sinai; Jesus was in the wilderness for *forty* days; and he remained with his disciples for *forty* days after his resurrection. If forty days means forty days, six days can mean six indefinite periods of time only when there is no other way of saving the creed.

Still another proof that the bible writers believed the universe was called into existence in six natural days, is their phrase, "and the evening and the morning were the first day," and "the evening and the morning were the second day," and so on to the end of the week. We do not need an evening and a morning to complete an indefinite era. And the seventh day on which, in imitation of the Lord, we are supposed to rest from our labors — is that, too, an indefinite period of time? Moreover, to intimate that six days were not enough for an almighty god to create the universe in

would be nothing less than skepticism. It is expressly stated in the bible that nothing "is too hard" for God; why, then, are not six days of twenty-four hours enough? They *were* enough, before Darwin. To extend the six days into six periods is to make terms with science, and when one begins to do that one has already lost his faith. In the bible of India, God only *thought* of creating a world, and behold the world was. That way of creating is more becoming to a god. He, who could create out of nothing, could create also without time. The Hindu god is bigger than the Hebrew. The former only *thinks* the world into being. The latter needs six eras, or indefinite time, for the same piece of work. It is the Hindu who has faith.

Let me explain: If I were asked, for example, to tell the time according to my watch, there is only *one* answer I could make, if I wished to tell the truth. I am limited to one answer — one only. But if I did not care to tell the time as I have it, there are a hundred things I could say instead. A man can say many things that are not true, but only one thing can he say if he wishes to answer a question honestly. The theologians do not seem to want to tell the truth about the bible; hence they have a hundred other things to say. There is no end to the dodges, excuses, apologies, sophisms — the allegorical, metaphorical, spiritual interpretations — they can resort to to avoid giving the one true answer about the bible.

To the scientist "six days" means six days; to the theologian they mean whatever the interests of his creed require them to mean. They may mean one thing to-day and another to-morrow. If the theologian is addressing missionary converts, "six days" means six

days, and if he is addressing scientists, he may make the "six days" mean six very long periods — as long as his hearers desire. The first and last duty of the theologian is to save his creed. He will tell the truth when it helps his creed; he will suppress the truth when he thinks it will hurt his creed. He was not ordained to be loyal to the truth; he was ordained to stand up for the creed. "An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven," cried Shylock, when he was asked to listen to the voice of humanity. Likewise, when Reason appeals to the clergyman to tell the truth about the bible, he answers: "An oath, an oath, I have taken an oath to defend the creed. Shall I lay perjury to my soul?"

But Genesis is as unreliable on the question of the age of the earth as it is on the way it came into existence. While it is not stated in the bible just how old the earth is, by comparing and computing the various dates it gives the precise biblical age of the earth may be arrived at. According to the chronology of the bible, the earth is something near six thousand years old. Of course, it may be that "years" in the bible no more means years than "days" means days, but if they do, then the bible is wrong again. It is now generally admitted by scientists that the age of our planet runs into the millions. There is not a single scholar who accepts the bible chronology seriously. According to Darwin, who weighs his statements before he makes them, two hundred millions of years would hardly be enough to bring about the multifarious forms of life which now exist on the earth.

Historians have discovered traces of a civilization on the banks of the Nile long before the mythical Adam

opened his eyes in Eden. Egypt was in blossom long before the forbidden tree was planted in paradise, and archeology has proved the existence of man on this planet myriads of years before Egypt reared her pyramids, or Athens her Parthenon. Out of the caves of Germany, England and France have been dug the bones of primitive man who saw the light of the sun and heard the swing of the sea nearly two hundred and fifty thousand years ago. In a publication of the Smithsonian Institution, issued and paid for by the United States Government, it is stated that there is enough proof to make the age of the earth at least seventy millions of years. Every day, except on Sunday, and everywhere, except in church, the United States affixes its official seal, and gives full approval, to the teachings of science; but on Sunday, and in church, the same United States officially bows down and worships as the Word of God a book that makes all science a heresy and a blasphemy. And we wonder that there is so much false profession in the land!

Mr. Gladstone, a few years ago, tried to help the theologians defend Genesis against the onslaughts of Darwinism. It was the object of his encounter with Huxley to show that the bible account of creation was as consistent with the known facts as the theory of evolution. In fact, Genesis, according to Gladstone, was a sort of introduction to Darwin's *Origin of Species*. In his admirable reply to Gladstone, Professor Huxley gives the bible version of the origin of life and the world to show the irreconcilable difference between revelation and science. Says Professor Huxley:

The bible teaches that this visible universe of ours came into existence at no great distance of time from the present,

and that the parts of which it is composed made their appearance in a certain definite order, in the space of six natural days, in such a manner that on the first of these days light appeared; that on the second the firmament or sky separated the waters above from the waters beneath the firmament; that on the third day the waters drew away from the dry land, and upon it a varied vegetable life, similar to that which now exists, made its appearance; that the fourth day was signalized by the apparition of the sun, the stars, the moon and the planets; that on the fifth day aquatic animals originated within the waters; that on the sixth day the earth gave rise to our four-footed terrestrial creatures, and to all variations of terrestrial animals except birds, which had appeared on the preceding day; and, finally, that man appeared upon the earth, and the emergence of the universe from chaos was finished.

Continuing, Professor Huxley shows how the theologians try to wiggle out of all that this implies by quietly changing the natural meaning of the words used by the bible writers. He says:

If we are to listen to many expositors of no mean authority, we must believe that what seems so clearly defined in Genesis—as if very great pains had been taken that there should be no possibility of mistake—is not the meaning of the text at all. The account is divided into periods that we may make just as long or as short as convenience requires. We are also to understand that it is consistent with the original text to believe that the most complex plants and animals may have been evolved by natural processes, lasting for millions of years, out of structureless rudiments. A person who is not a Hebrew scholar can only stand aside and admire the marvelous flexibility of a language which admits of such diverse interpretations.*

The Great Tragedy

BUT it is when we come to read the bible story of the creation of man that its unreliability becomes more manifest than ever. The story of Adam and Eve seems to have been lifted bodily out of some foreign document. This is evident from the fact that it is

* *Controverted Questions*, page 100.

never referred to again throughout the Old Testament. When the Jews were carried into captivity they became familiar with the Babylonian legend of creation, its Garden of Eden, the serpent, the forbidden tree, the fall of man, etc. The name of the first man in the Babylonian story was *Adami*.

The belief that man was formed out of the earth is very ancient. Men saw dead bodies return to dust, and, naturally enough, they inferred from it that man was made out of the dust of the earth.

In the Jewish story, as related in the second chapter of Genesis, the first man was a bachelor, and if he had liked that sort of life, woman, in all probability, would never have been created. It is suggested in the story that God asked Adam to choose a companion from among the animals, which were made to pass before him, that he might name them, and if possible select from among them a companion for himself :

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him.*

Adam was lonely :

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs . . . and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.†

The story of the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, on which the whole theological system of the churches is built, is so crude that it can not stand any kind of an examination. Adam and Eve, for instance, are warned against the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But, really, they did

* Genesis ii, 20.

† Ibid. 21-22.

not have to eat of this tree to be able to tell good from evil, for they already knew the difference. When Adam saw God, his maker, did he not love and honor him? If so, he knew what was good. Did he not love his garden home? If so, he could tell what was good. And did he not rejoice when Eve appeared before him with the freshness of beauty in her cheeks and the sparkle of love in her eyes? If so, Adam knew what was bliss. What was the object, then, of telling Adam that he must not learn to distinguish good from evil? Did not Adam and Eve enjoy their daily walks and musings? Did they not see that the trees and the flowers springing up at their feet were fair to look upon? Were they not able to smell the fragrance that came with each passing zephyr, or to feast on the luxury of shade and color that greeted their eyes? Did not the song of the birds wake melodies in their souls? Surely they were not *wooden* beings without either feeling or taste; yet, if they could feel and choose, they certainly *knew* what was good and what was not good before they ate of the magical tree in Eden.

Again, were not Adam and Eve made in the image of God? How, then, could they be ignorant of good and evil? If they could not tell the difference between good and evil, or between God and the devil, in what sense were they created moral beings? A man really created in the likeness of God does not have to eat of a tree before he can tell right from wrong.

God said to Adam: "For on the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That is conclusive evidence that Adam knew good from evil before he ate of the forbidden tree; for he *feared* death. He must have known that it was a terrible thing to die;

he must have known enough to prefer life to death, else he could not have been scared by such a punishment.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *thou shalt not eat of it.*” This was not only a superfluous commandment, but also one that could under no conceivable circumstances be obeyed. How could any one be prevented from acquiring knowledge? To live is to learn. Why did God give Adam eyes and ears if he was not to see or hear? But to see and hear is to compare, and to compare is to learn. Memory retains what the eyes and the ears have communicated to it, and thus is born experience—the universal teacher. To give a man a pair of lungs, and then to tell him he shall not breathe, would not be more unreasonable than to give a man organs, senses, brains—to make him in the image of God—and then to menace him with instant death if he should acquire knowledge. To give an impossible commandment is to *desire* its violation.

The apologists of the bible say that God was only trying Adam’s character, as he tried Abraham’s faith when he ordered him to sacrifice his son Isaac. But why try Adam with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Why not with some other tree? And why try him with an impossible commandment? The first requisite of a trial is that it be fair. Was it fair to deny to living and growing minds, “divinely” made, the acquisition of experience? Is it fair to deny to one athirst, the truth? And for whose benefit was the trial? God certainly must have known in advance how Adam would behave under the circumstances; and as for Adam, how could he act otherwise than as

God had foreordained? Let the truth be told: the bible deity was only seeking a pretext to damn the first man he ever created and to curse the only world he ever made. And this, that the clergy may be able to declaim, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for it" !

If God meant only to test Adam's loyalty to his creator, how explain the following text:

And the Lord God said, Behold the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now *lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever*; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden. . . . So he drove out the man.*

I am sorry, but that text places God in a poor light. The tree was forbidden, to prevent Adam from becoming a higher being. The "Good God" was angry because man had become *like one of us*. And "he drove out the man" for an equally envious reason: "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, *and eat, and live forever*." The "Lord God" did not desire man to be immortal — that is why he "drove" him out of Paradise, and to make the fall of man sure, to prevent his ever rising to "divine" heights, the Lord God stationed guards with flaming swords at the gates of Eden to beat back man from "the way of the tree of life." And is this the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for it? Had he been more honest with Adam the crime of the crucifixion might have been prevented.

It is one of the principal tenets of all the churches that man was created immortal, and that but for

* Genesis iii, 22-24.

Adam's disobedience there would have been no death in the world and Paradise would have remained in man's possession forever. But there is not the shadow of a foundation in the story as told in the bible for such an inference. The bible teaches the very opposite of what the churches hold. Adam is driven from Paradise to *prevent* him from becoming immortal by eating also of the tree of life. If God really wished the happiness of man, he would, instead of warning him against magical trees, have instructed him in the things that preserve life and promote joy. He would have told Adam and Eve how to love one another, to moderate their desires, and to labor daily for beauty as well as for bread. He would have warned them, not against the tree of knowledge, but against the cunning, crafty serpent, of whose existence he leaves them in utter ignorance. If the bible God were really the friend of man, he would never have pitted two inexperienced children like Adam and Eve against Satan, the Lord of hell, and a match for God Almighty himself. And in the hour of danger the Lord was not there to help his little ones! He left them alone with the fiend who plays with loaded dice! By whose permission did the devil make his appearance in Paradise? And was there a devil before Adam fell? What a story! Created and concealed in Eden, there was a devil, a monster, who springs upon the first human pair, and they bleed to death in his clutches; and "the Lord God" does not appear on the scene until after the devil has retired. And this is the being whom we must call "Our Father"! We are unable to find in the bible either a paradise or a father. We have been taught to believe that where the devil is

there is hell; the devil was in the Garden of Eden, therefore, the Garden of Eden could not have been truly a Paradise. And had God really been a "father," he would never have forgotten to warn his children against the serpent and his deadly sting.

But the story as told in Genesis is more creditable to the Evil One than to "the Lord God." The devil told the truth to Eve when he assured her that "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." His statement squares with the facts. He did not deceive them. Nor did he coax, or urge them to eat of the fruit of the tree. Adam and Eve were left to do as they pleased. The devil did not threaten them with dire consequences if they refused to obey his word. No attempt was made to scare or "stampede" them into plucking the forbidden fruit. All he did was to tell them exactly what would happen if they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; and then he retired. Let us place in parallel columns the words spoken by the serpent, or the devil whom he is supposed to have personified, and those of the Lord God:

The Lord God said:
But of the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil,
thou shalt not eat of it: for
in the day that thou eatest
thereof thou shalt surely die.*

And the serpent said:
Ye shall not surely die.
For God doth know that in
the day ye eat thereof, then
your eyes shall be opened, and
ye shall be as gods, knowing
good and evil.†

Which of the two speakers told the truth? Adam and Eve did *not* die on the day they ate of the tree, as God had said they would — Adam lived to be nine

* This was spoken to Adam alone, for as yet Eve was not created. See Genesis ii, 16, 17.

† Ibid. iii, 5.

hundred years old — and their eyes were opened to know good and evil, just as the devil had predicted. We have already anticipated and answered the argument that when God said they would die on the day they ate of the forbidden tree, he meant they would become mortal. They were *not* immortal before they had tasted of the fruit, since God expelled them from Eden to prevent them from eating also of the tree of life and becoming immortal.

To few of the readers of the bible has it ever occurred that the first commandment God ever gave to man practically made the acquisition of knowledge a crime. The truth is that the first commandment of every revealed religion is a "Thou shalt not know." According to Genesis, the Lord offered a Paradise to man on condition that he steer clear of knowledge. There has been considerable discussion as to the precise location of the Garden of Eden. But if we do not know where the Garden of Eden was, we know very well *what* it was. The Garden of Eden was — *Ignorance*. This is the Paradise which the revealed religions offer to man. To know is to be expelled from Paradise. After God had placed Adam in Paradise, that is to say, in a state of ignorance, he said to him: "Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge," threatening him at the same time with death on the day that he ate of the fruit of that tree. Everything else was permitted save the acquisition of knowledge. On the day that man opened his eyes he lost the paradise of the gods — Ignorance!

It has been customary to trace modern scepticism, or free inquiry, to the eighteenth century, or to the Renaissance; but in reality modern thought began with

Adam in the Garden of Eden — assuming for the time being the correctness of the narrative. Man broke the very first commandment the gods ever gave, “Thou shalt not know,” and by so doing he became himself a menace to the gods. That is very interesting. It was not man who died on the day the fruit of knowledge was plucked; it was the gods. “Take care!” said man to God. “Take care! The day on which I eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge thou shalt die!”

It is now admitted by the foremost biblical scholars that there are really two different stories of the creation of man in the first and second chapters of the bible. The universe is called into being by *Elohim* in the first; while *Jahve* is the name of the creator in the second. Another important difference between the two accounts of the creation is that in the one, man appears before the deity has completed the creation of the heaven and the earth; while in the other man is the last thing God creates. It will be observed also that there is not a word said in the second account about man being made in the image of God, or of his being created male and female; while there is nothing in the first account about a garden or a forbidden tree. On the contrary, in the earlier story every tree is given for “meat” unto the man and the woman, who were created at the same time, and not the one out of a rib of the other, and at a later time, as is related in the second account. In the first, or *Elohistic* story, God blesses Adam and Eve and commands them to “be fruitful and multiply”; in the second, or *Jehovistic* story, child-bearing is not a blessing, but a curse pronounced upon the woman for having eaten of the forbidden fruit. Eve has no offspring until she is expelled from Paradise in the second

version, while in the first, Adam and Eve are commanded from the start to "multiply and replenish the earth."

But why are both stories published? In all probability, to satisfy both the *Elohistic* and *Jehovistic* factions. It is also probable that the different accounts are the work of different compilers or collectors of news. The bible gives many signs of being a miscellany of floating reports and rumors, or "they says," picked up here and there, and put together very loosely. Nor should we be surprised at the differences between the *Elohistic* and *Jehovistic* writers, for they are not more hopelessly at variance with each other than are the evangelists who tell the story of Jesus.

II.

Taboo and Totem.

WHAT is the most probable explanation of the Garden of Eden story, whether in its Babylonian or Hebrew form? To answer this question and also to help explain many of the institutions and ceremonial observances in the bible, it will be necessary to acquaint ourselves with the meaning of certain words, such as *taboo*, *totem* and *magic*. The word *taboo* has come into the modern language from the Polynesian, and it means forbidden. And yet there is a fundamental difference between a thing which is forbidden in the English sense of that word, and a thing which is *taboo* in the sense which primitive races attached to that word. For example, when we see a notice which reads, "Passengers are forbidden to stand on the plat-

form of the train," or "Smoking not allowed in the dining-car," the object of the interdiction is in either case perfectly plain. We know why the act in question is prohibited. There is no suggestion of mystery about it. A thing that is *taboo*, however, is so for a reason which is undiscoverable. The bible forbids the eating of pork. Why? The theologians try to explain that the prohibition against pork had a sanitary motive. Such an answer is tantamount to an admission on their part that they have not studied the bible with any care at all. To say that Moses objected to pork on sanitary grounds would be about as reasonable as to say that he commanded the extermination of Gentiles on humanitarian grounds. Yet many fall into the mistake of supposing that it was the fear of leprosy, or the thread-worm, which induced the Jewish legislator to place swine's flesh under a ban. To see how inadequate this explanation is, all we have to do is to remember that in all the bible there is not a single disease of any kind which is caused by the eating or the drinking of anything. Disease in the bible is supernatural. Meats or vegetables, the observance or neglect of dietary and sanitary laws, have absolutely nothing to do with the coming or going of a pestilence. Health, in the bible, has no more to do with cleanliness of the body, with the use of soap, or moderation and prudence in eating and drinking, than success in war, or prosperity in life has with personal merit or effort. It is God who sends both health and sickness, famine or the plague, as he sends manna from the clouds and quails from the sea. To win a battle the people had only to stand still, and see the Lord fight for them. Not until the Greeks appeared in history was it discovered that health and

sickness had natural causes, and that the gods had nothing whatever to do with them. What, then, is the explanation of the interdict against swine's flesh in the bible? Before answering that, let us look at a few other examples of *taboo* in the Old Testament.

The name of God, like swine's flesh, was *taboo*. "That shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (the *in vain* is a rationalist explanation which was affixed to the text by a later hand). Now, why was the name of God forbidden? In all probability it was to prevent the stranger or the enemy from calling upon their God; it explains the unwillingness of the Jews to share Jahve with the rest of the world. But it is as much a guess to say why the name of God was *taboo*, as it is to give a reason for the ecclesiastical ban against the hog. The commandments of science are intelligible; the dogmas of religion are dark. Why do we have to believe in the trinity, the virgin birth, etc., in order to be saved? It is a mystery.

Another *taboo* was the Ark of the Covenant. This was a wooden box, supposed to be the retreat of the deity. To touch this wooden chest meant instant death. Uzzah was instantly killed for trying to steady the ark in transit, "for the oxen shook it."* And, on another occasion, over fifty thousand people were massacred "because they had looked into the ark of the Lord."† Why destroy "fifty thousand and three score and ten men" for such a trifle? If it were because they disobeyed the priest, was it not the duty of the priest to give the reason which made touching or looking into a box a deadly crime? But in religion

* II Samuel vi, 6.

† I Samuel vi, 19.

to ask for an explanation is also *taboo*. The things of religion are not supposed to be understood. To understand is *taboo*.

A more important example of things forbidden without reason or rhyme is the Sabbath. The prevailing interpretation is that out of compassion for man and beast the deity ordained a day of rest. But the truth is that pity for the laboring man or the animal had positively nothing to do with the institution of "holy moons" and Sabbaths. It is the stress of modern thought that leads priests and rabbis to explain the Sabbath on Rationalist grounds. To begin with, oriental races were not so exceedingly fond of work as to necessitate a divine fiat to compel them to take a rest. If anything, they needed to be urged and scourged to work at all. They were only too willing to let the Lord do everything for them. The ideal of the oriental believer was to be "like the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin."* What need was there for the bible people to invent machinery, to build factories, or to acquire science, when a miracle-working God was ever at their elbow.

"*O, to be Nothing, Nothing,*" is to this day, one of the hymns in the churches.

In the twenty-second chapter of Deuteronomy it is forbidden "to plough with an ox and an ass together." The theologians quote the text to prove that kindness to animals was the motive of this ordinance, as kindness to man was, of the Sabbath. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Why, then, is it unlawful to yoke an ass with an ox? It is another one of the mysteries of religion.

* The Sermon on the Mount.

We have only to read on to learn that motives of humanity, justice or economy play no part at all in these ordinances. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds," says the same chapter. Surely this was not from any consideration of compassion for the soil or the seed. And when the bible again says: "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sort, as of woollen and linen together," is it for sanitary or economic reasons that the commandment was given? When again we read, "Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox or of sheep," etc., it surely was not for any hygienic reason that fat was prohibited, for it goes on to say that "the fat belongs to the Lord." But why should the Lord be so jealous of fat? It is no more possible to understand the ordinance against fat, or mixed seed sowing, or garments of mingled yarn, and a thousand other similarly puerile edicts in the Old Testament, than it is to understand why it is necessary to sprinkle a man with water, or rub him with oil, before he can be a good Christian. Why an ox and an ass should not plough together is just as much a mystery as transubstantiation. The English and the American bible societies are translating these Hebrew and Christian riddles and distributing the book at the rate of about twenty million copies a year, costing an amount of money, energy and time, which if devoted to the advancement of *health* alone would do more toward making this earth a paradise for man, now and here, than all the mysteries and miracles of religion.

But let us not forget to explain the origin of the ban against the Sabbath, or the seventh day. It will surprise the Sabbatarian to learn that originally work was forbidden on the seventh day of the week for the

same reason that many in our day object to start on a journey or on an enterprise of any kind on a Friday, or on the thirteenth of the month. The prejudice against Friday and the number "13" is based on the belief that both the day and the number are evil. Why? Nobody knows exactly. In the same way, the seventh day was considered by all Semitic races as an evil day — a day of disaster, unpropitious and accursed. The fear of the savage for the seventh day was as foolish as our fear of Friday, or of the number "13." But we laugh at our own prejudice about Friday and regard the savage's awe of the seventh day as inspired.

As already stated, the seventh day was *taboo* because it was supposed to be accursed. No work was to be done on that day, not because the work would spoil the day, but because they feared the day would spoil the work. Even in our day, if a man goes fishing on a bright Sunday, and is drowned, or if children go picnicking on the Sabbath, and are run over, the usual comment is that they lost their lives, not for fishing or picnicking, but for doing these perfectly innocent things on a certain day. Sunday is an evil day — for fishing, or for recreation of any kind. On the Sabbath, the safest thing, according to the bible, is to stay indoors. It is a bad day for pleasure, and a bad day for labor. There is only one thing that is safe on the Sabbath — going to church. Do we wonder now that children hated the Sabbath, or that a gloom fell upon both young and old on that lugubrious day?

But this supposedly evil day in time came to be regarded as "holy." I say *supposedly* evil, because there are no evil days, even as there are no "holy" days. One day is like another; it is superstition that

makes a certain day, or place, or number, holier than another. And we have a right to be suspicious of a religion that thinks more, for example, of the number 3, or 7, or 40, or of the first or seventh day of the week than of other days or numbers. One of the motives which, according to the bible, actuated the building of a temple for Jehovah was to observe more solemnly "the Sabbaths and the new moons of the Lord."* The new moons! Why is a "new moon" more virtuous or talismanic than a full moon? What has righteousness to do with "new moons" or full moons? Why do we have to spend millions of dollars every year to send missionaries abroad to teach them the observance of "Sabbaths and new moons"? I am aware that the missionaries omit the "new moons," but is it not also in the Word of God? And what right has the missionary to drop *anything* from the Word of God? Has he forgotten the awful warning of the closing words of the bible? "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life," etc.† But there is not a sect that has not both taken from, and added to, the Word of God. We tremble to think what will happen to them. "God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."‡ And what could be worse than the plagues mentioned in the bible?§

* II Chronicles ii, 4.

† Revelation xxii, 19.

‡ Revelation xxii, 18.

§ One of the rather mild plagues is described in Leviticus xxvi, 22-29: "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children. . . . And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters." Twenty million copies a year of this book are sold!

As a day of rest and recreation, of intellectual, moral and æsthetic culture and pleasure, Sunday will always be one of the dearest institutions of civilization. But as already explained, humanitarian or ethical motives had no share at all in the making of the Jewish-Christian Sabbath. Would the clergy, for instance, consent to have any other day than Sunday observed as "holy"? Would they have the courage to call Tuesday or Thursday the Sabbath of the Lord, sanctified and set apart from all eternity? If not, the inference is inevitable that what they are principally interested in is the *day* — the *taboo* — and not the rest and profit which may be derived from quitting work on a given day of the week.

Among the primitive races a thing was *taboo* either because it was supposed to be "unholy" or because it was supposed to be "holy." A Catholic must not touch the sacraments because they are "holy," and the Jew must not touch swine's flesh because it is "unholy." In the one case, as in the other, it is a "thou shalt not." Why the touch of the fingers should defile the sacraments but not the touch of the palate or the lips; or why swine's flesh should mar one's character or standing before the community, is not explained because it can not be explained. Theology is a collection of enigmas. The less the people understand their religion the more they believe in it. A *taboo* is not meant to be understood; it is only meant to be obeyed. The Babylonians, from whom the Hebrews got their Sabbath, refrained from work on that day because they considered it an evil day; we refrain from work on that day because we think the day too sacred for work. It is not at all strange that the reason for a given

taboo, being no more than a whim, should in the course of time change. The "thou shalt not" remains; the *why* does not matter much, because the *why* belongs to *reason*, and religion is a matter of *faith*.

The Totem

TO show further how the unholy becomes, in time, the holy, or *vice versa*, let us glance at another barbaric institution of the past, that of the *totem*. The word *taboo*, as already explained, is Polynesian in origin; the word *totem* has come to us from the American Indian. *Totem* is a more difficult word to translate into modern thought. The most popular definition I could give to it would be to say that a *totem* is a "mascot." And yet, it is very much more. To savage tribes a *totem* was an object, more frequently an animal, which was sacred to the particular tribe that had identified itself with it. The thing, or the plant, or the beast thus selected, became an emblem, badge or bond of union. It served also as a sort of password by which the members of the tribe were recognized, and a center around which the clan grouped itself. To the *totem* they looked for preservation against famine, war and annihilation as a tribe. The *totem* was the soul of the tribe — the tribe in essence. The golden-rod is the national flower of America, the lily is upon the shield of France, the shamrock is Irish, the world over; in some such sense, only meaning very much more, was the *totem* to our savage ancestors.

Now we are in a position to guess at least why the bible forbids swine's flesh. Solomon Reinach, a dis-

tinguished Jewish scholar, and member of the French Academy, says that the boar was the *totem* of the Jew long before Moses appeared on the scene.* The totem was protected by a *taboo*, and, therefore, to eat it was a national crime. To destroy one's *totem* was a sacrilege and a blasphemy, punishable by death. They looked upon the man who ate his *totem* with more abhorrence than we would feel toward a fellow countryman who insulted his flag. Here, then, we have two counter currents; the Sabbath, beginning as an evil day, becomes "holy," while the hog, once a *totem*, an object of reverence, a god, degenerates into an unclean beast. Yet the one, as much as the other, is as *taboo* as ever.

The "thou shalt not labor on the Sabbath day," and the "thou shalt not eat swine's flesh," remain the same, though the *why* is shifted from the "because it is unholy" to a "because it is holy," in the case of the Sabbath; and from the "because it is holy" to a "because it is unholy," in the case of the hog. In the meantime, it remains as true as ever that there is nothing either "holy" or "unholy" about a hog or a day. Why was the *seventh* day cursed or blest? Why, of all the animals, was the *hog* selected, first to be adored and then to be abhorred? While many interesting reasons could be suggested, the truth is that, like the majority of religious rites and dogmas, both *taboo* and *totem* are impenetrable mysteries. When, in the *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock is asked why he covets a

* *Orpheus*, Solomon Reinach, page 27: "Les Juifs pieux s'abstiennent de manger du porc, parce que leurs lointains ancêtres, cinq ou six mille ans avant notre ère, avaient pour *totem* le sanglier."

pound of that merchant's flesh, "nearest his heart," with a toss of his head, and his eyes afire, he replies: "It is my humor."* And if we were to ask Jehovah why swine's flesh is taboo, or why the seventh day is "holy," or why the priest under penalty of death must carry a golden bell and a pomegranate upon the hem of his robe†, or why the man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people‡, or why "Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die,"§ or why it is a deadly crime to peep into a wooden box, or yoke an ass with an ox, the answer would be the same: "It is my humor."

Nothing could be more convincing that *humor* and not reason dictated the commandments in the bible, than the large number of *taboos*, the neglect of which was invariably visited with death. If a man kindled a fire in his kitchen on the Sabbath, or picked up sticks, he "shall surely be put to death"; if he forgot to observe the feast of the passover, or ate leavened bread during the passover, or ate the fat, or the blood of the animals he slaughtered for food, he "shall surely be put to death"; if a man made a holy ointment, or perfumery, or if he offered sacrifices without the help of a priest, or killed his cattle without giving a part of it to the priest, he "shall surely be put to death." If a man entered the house of the dying, or touched a pig or a dead animal, and did not pay the priest to absolve him from his guilt, he "shall surely be put to death."

* Act iv, Scene I.

† Exodus xxviii, 34-43.

‡ Genesis xvii, 14.

§ Numbers xvii, 13.

The Old Testament is a veritable deathtrap. On every page, and behind every sentence, almost, there is a trap. It takes a very clever dodger to escape falling into one of them. Even Moses was caught and smashed in a trap. Out of all the people who left Egypt for the promised land, all but two perished in the wilderness because of some infringement of the ceremonial law. What a failure! Even as Eden, offered for a paradise to man, became the tomb of the human race, the promised land became the cemetery of the people who sacrificed their homes for it. Such is the humor of the gods!

But let us speak of another *totem*. The Catholics eat fish on Friday. Not one out of a million Catholics knows why fish is preferred to meat on a certain day in the week. The fish, too, was at one time a *totem* in Syria. The early Christians, being largely from that part of the country where the fish was sacred, made a place for it in their new faith. In the writings of the Christian Fathers, Jesus is often called the Big Fish, and his disciples the little fish. Upon many of the ancient Christian tombstones there was engraved a fish. Tertullian, a shining light in the early church, speaks of his converts as "the fishes born in the waters of baptism." In the early communion service, the fish represented the divine elements. To this day the fish, an ancient Syrian *totem*, holds its sway not only upon Christians, but also upon the Jews. An orthodox Jew, no matter how poor, must have his fish every Friday evening.*

But how did people come to eat their *totem*? It

* *Orpheus*, Solomon Reinach, page 29.

was explained above that swine's flesh is *taboo*, because of the sacredness of the boar to an ancient Semitic tribe; if the fish was also sacred, and protected by a "thou shalt not," or a *taboo*, how did it come to be an article of diet? Under exceptional circumstances all primitive tribes ate their *totems*, or their gods. In the time of famine or war they fed on the sacred beast for self-preservation—before which all other laws break down. Moreover, it was their belief that by eating their *totem* they acquired its virtues and strength. To partake of the qualities of the *totem*, and to become more closely identified with it—made one with it—it was deemed necessary on solemn occasions to eat it. Eating the *totem* came to be, in time, a religious rite. Of course, it was with many regrets and apologies that the savage slew his *totem* for food. He mourned over it and blamed himself for the death of his god. On the other hand, as intimated above, he argued that the only way he could get into a closer communion with his *totem*, and become a partaker of his virtues, he must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood. The Christian communion service is the modern version of an ancient rite. On Sundays, and with much mourning, the Christian crucifies again his *totem*, to eat of his body, broken for him on the cross, and to drink of his blood, shed for the remission of his sins. Is it not wonderful how one superstition is like another?

The Holy Ghost, one of the members of the trinity, is represented in the form of a dove, because, like the fish and the boar, the dove was another ancient *totem*. Whenever an animal, or a tree, or any other object, is made to represent the deity, as the dove represents the Holy Ghost, or the fish the Son of God, or the bull, or

the eagle Zeus, we may be quite sure that at one time these animals were gods. Gradually, from being regarded as gods, they came only to represent them. When the Holy Ghost, now and then, takes on the form of a dove, it goes to prove that the Holy Ghost started as a dove — the dove *was* the Holy Ghost. And just as races of men sometimes fall back to the level of their ancestors, the gods go back to the dove, and the fish, and the boar, whence they came. The gods, too, like their religions, die of the same disease — that of being found out.

The point which it has been the object of the discussion on *taboos* and *totems* to establish is that the laws and commandments in the bible, as well as the doings attributed to the deity represent, not Reason, but *humor*. Whim plays the chief rôle in the divine drama. Noah is ordered to take with him into the ark, “of every clean beast” seven pairs; “and of beasts that are not clean, two pairs, the male and the female.” But no instruction is given him as to what makes a beast clean or unclean, or how Noah is to tell the one from the other. Nor is it explained why a certain number of unclean beasts are to be saved, while all the unclean of the human race are to be drowned. The only answer we would get from the “Lord God,” if we asked him for an explanation, would be, “It is my humor.”

And why should any animals be preserved at all? If the deity could by a word of his mouth cause all forms of life, vegetable and animal, to spring forth out of the ground; if by a mere “Let there be light,” he could create light — why should he trouble himself about packing the ark with specimen animals to pre-

serve the species? And why was it necessary to rain for forty days, to drown a world which it took him about six days to create out of nothing? But we are reasoning, and in religion, reason is *taboo*.

How different is science! The bible is a book of puzzles; science is common sense. The bible treats of forms and ceremonies — of holy water, holy oils, holy wafers and of forbidden trees and animals. Science, on the other hand, explains the inexorable laws of nature, a knowledge of which, and obedience to which, makes for life and happiness. Let us rejoice that science has broken for us the spell of superstition.

III.

The Bible and Magic

STILL another word, the explanation of which would greatly help us to understand the bible, is the word *magic*. A magician, according to Voltaire, is a man who pretends to possess the secret of doing what nature can not do. Another Frenchman defines magic as the "strategy of the savage." There is not very much difference between these two definitions. Magic is the weapon, or the art, or the science, of the savage against the powers of nature. The magician claims to be able to "go one better" than nature, or to bring nature to terms. If there is a drought, the magician offers to compel rain from the stubborn skies; if the plague is upon the land, the magician bids it steal away; if wild beasts attack his hut, the magician throws a spell over them and makes them harmless. Fire will not burn,

water will not drown, the grave can not hold its prey, and even the gods become helpless at a word from the magician. Magic, in a sense, is the *coup d'état* of the savage.

When one country is at war with another, the best generalship consists in finding out the tactics of the enemy with a view of beating him at his own game. Likewise, the aim of the magician is to steal the secret of the gods and then play the part of a god not only better than the gods themselves, but against them as well. Is not man wonderful!

In one sense, magic is science in the making. But while science seeks to control nature through knowledge, magic resorts to spells, charms, incantations and concoctions. In other words, magic is dishonest science.

Now, much as I regret to say it, the bible is more than tainted with this kind of science. Not a word is there in the bible about studying the laws of nature, for study is not necessary where there is magic. The real thing, science, is made superfluous by the imitation article — magic. Thus the bible, by its preference for a false science, postponed, if it did not succeed in defeating altogether, the intellectual evolution of man.

Scarcely anything happens in the bible in a natural way. Miracles are so many, and so frequent, that there is practically no *nature* in the bible. The dead arise, the rivers flow backward, the sea turns into dry land, sticks change into serpents, the axe head floats on the water, walls and fortifications fall at the sound of a trumpet, animals talk, virgins become mothers, sun and moon are arrested and then set free, and a universe is produced out of nothing, with as little ado as a magician requires to pull a rabbit out of his sleeve.

We are in the land of magic. Nature is suspended, and the supernatural is in full swing.

I read the other day of a country farmer who went to see a celebrated conjurer perform his wonders. He saw the "wizard" pick money out of the air, shoot watches into people's pockets, change copper into gold and silver, and perform a hundred other equally marvelous feats. As he was leaving the charmed presence of the juggler, he expressed his surprise that so resourceful a man should be under the necessity of giving performances to earn a living. He could not understand why a man whose touch turned everything to gold should collect dimes at the box office. Of course, the explanation is perfectly simple: The wonders which the conjurer performs are sham wonders. In the same way, the miracles in the bible never help anybody nor accomplish anything because they are sham miracles. The bush which burns, and yet is not consumed, is a sham bush — the bush is not a bush, and the fire is not real fire. The few loaves and fishes with which Jesus fed a great multitude were sham loaves and fishes, and the multitude which, though hungry, could not exhaust the food, was a sham multitude. Sham bread, sham multitude, sham hunger! Such are the wonders of the conjurer or the magician in or outside the bible. If Jesus really possessed the power of multiplying a few loaves into an exhaustless supply of bread, why is there then any poverty in the world?

Moreover, the miracles — which are as thick on the pages of the bible as blackberries on a bush — what good did they do to the people for whose benefit they were performed? If the Egyptians perished in their homes, the Jews perished in the wilderness; if

the Egyptians lost their slaves, the Jews lost their sons and daughters — lost themselves. What good did all the miracles performed in their behalf do for them? Their city, Jerusalem, was set on fire, their homes pillaged, their children put to the edge of the sword, over and over again. What benefit did they derive from the ten thousand miracles lavished upon them? And look at the Greeks! Not one miracle did Jehovah perform for them. Yet they rose to be the masters of the world, and are still by their worth and genius, the teachers of mankind.

The most unexpected and impossible things are said and done in the bible. When Abraham was born, his father, Terah, was seventy years old. In every other book, as the father grows older, the son, too, would advance in years. But in the bible, while Terah grows older, Abraham grows younger, or stops growing altogether, so that when his father is two hundred and five years old, he himself is only seventy-five years old, making him sixty years younger than he should be by all the laws of arithmetic. But what is arithmetic to a magician? When the theologian says three times one is one, he is not thinking of so little a thing as mathematics — there are no impossibilities for the magician. He can make the three one, and the one three. Listen to one of the great Christian Fathers, Tertullian:

What have the philosopher and the Christian in common? The disciple of Greece, and the disciple of heaven? What have Athens and Jerusalem, the church and the academy, heretics and Christians in common? There is no more inquiry for us, now that Christ has come, nor any occasion for further investigation, since we have the gospel. . . . The Son of God is dead; it is right credible because it is absurd; being buried he has arisen; it is certain, because it is impossible.

There are no difficulties for theologians. If

"Isaiah, the prophet, cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow (of the sun) ten degrees backward . . . in the dial,"* why could not Abraham grow backward? If Joshua could arrest the sun, what is a little miracle like that of Abraham standing still while the whole world moved on? If Jesus could be born without a father, why could not Melchisedec be born without either a father or a mother? This personage was, perhaps, one of the most wonderful in bible history. He had neither beginning nor ending, neither a father nor a mother.

For this Melchisedec . . . to whom also Abraham gave a tenth (of the spoils) . . . without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God.†

Wonderful as he was, he believed in getting his share of the spoils. The theologians, in the bible, or outside of it, do not seem to be in the least surprised at the incredible things in the Word of God. If Eve were not startled when she heard the serpent talk, neither is the American theologian who takes that for his text. If Balaam was not at all perplexed when his ass opened its mouth and asked him a question, neither are the divinity professors in our universities who explain the incident to their pupils. This, if anything, is the more wonderful miracle.

If I were riding a horse, and all of a sudden the animal should turn around and ask me what the subject of my lecture would be for next Sunday, I would certainly be dumfounded. Yet neither Balaam, nor his fellow theologians of to-day, show the least per-

* II Kings xx, 11.

† Hebrews vii, 1-3.

turbation over an ass interrogating his rider. They can not afford to. Is not God almighty? And, besides, upon what grounds would they be justified in rejecting this or that miracle while accepting others? Was it more difficult for Balaam's ass to have talked than for Christ to have been born without a father, or Melchisedec without any parents at all? Magic and miracle know no laws.

"If God had not opened the mouth of the ass," said Father Ignatius, a modern evangelist of the Anglican communion, "remember that there would have been no Christ." The Christian who says he believes in the virgin birth, but not in the talking serpent or ass, is a sceptic already. The reasoning by which he rejects the one miracle is equally effective against all the others. To accept the Christ miracle by *faith*, and to reject the Balaam miracle by *reason*, is a procedure which leads to anarchism in thought and faith. Oh, no; if you believe in the supernatural at all you will have to believe in Melchisedec and Balaam, as you do in the virgin-born Christ. You can not choose your miracles. All or none! And the man who believes in one miracle is not a bit different from the man who believes in a million.

The Unitarian president of America* defines Christianity as "The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." When Edward Everett Hale died, the Unitarians said that "Pater noster"—our Father—expressed the heart and soul of his Christianity. A short time ago, Doctor Eliot, president *emeritus* of Harvard University, undertook to reduce Christianity

* President Taft.

to the same simple terms. The idea common to these men is that the only essential thing is the God idea. Never mind about Balaam, or the virgin birth. "Our Father which art in heaven" is all that is necessary. But one moment: Is not God as much a miracle as Christ or Balaam? How do we know God is, or that he is a father, or that he is in heaven? By faith? Why then is not faith also enough to make all miracles true? The "Our Father" is a chip of the same old block of supernaturalism. There are against one little chip from the block all the objections that there are against the whole block. If God is our father by faith, then Christ was born of a virgin by faith, and the whale swallowed Jonah by faith, and the pope is the vicar of God by faith, and so on to the end of the creed. Let us be consistent; which is another way of saying, let us be honest.

The Unbelievable in the Bible

THE bible taxes even *credulity* beyond the point of endurance. No matter how willing one may be to believe everything in the bible, there is a limit even to one's willingness to believe. When Moses was upon the mountain talking with God, the people down in the plain were worshipping idols. Is it possible that with the quaking and thundering mountain before them, with the deity sitting on its summit, the Jews would have had the temerity to worship a golden calf? Yet this is precisely what the Jews are accused of doing. The parting of the Red Sea is easier to believe than that the Jews worshiped a calf in the immediate pres-

ence of "the one true God"! Let us glance at the story as it is told in the bible.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. And they stood at the nether part of the mount.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.*

Is it believable that, under such circumstances, with the only God in sight of all the people, and his voice in their ears, the Jews could have turned to Aaron and said to him:

Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.†

Both stories can not be true. Either there was no quaking mountain, or sounding trumpet, or voice of God answering Moses from the summit, or the tale of the golden calf is an interpolation. If the people were too stupid to know better, how was it that Aaron, the brother of Moses, who had met "the true God" on several occasions, instead of showing the least indignation or surprise, says to them:

Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.‡

Yes, "bring me your gold," has been the cry of the mystery-man from the beginning of the world!

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they

* Exodus xix, 16, 17, 19.

† Exodus xxxii, 1.

‡ Exodus xxxii, 2.

said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

All this in full view of the flaming mountain, with God conversing with Moses, and the trumpet blowing louder and louder! It is simply impossible. There is not credulity enough in man, it seems to me, for such contradictory stories. I know men *say* they believe in them, but *do* they?

Strange as was the conduct of Aaron and the people on this occasion, the behavior of Moses, when he came down and saw the people dancing like naked savages about their newly fashioned god,† was even more inexplicable. He made a drink out of the golden calf, which he first ground into powder, and caused "the children of Israel to drink of it."‡ What could have been his idea in converting the god into a beverage? A text like that indicates plainly the presence of fetishism in the bible. Even as looking at a brazen serpent was supposed to cure them of serpent bites, the drinking of gods melted into a beverage was thought to be a remedy against idolatry. Other examples, proving the fetishistic beliefs of Moses, are not wanting in the bible. To make a house "holy" or proof against the plague, Moses put up the following magical prescription:

And he shall take to cleanse the house two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

And he shall kill the one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water:

And he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times:

* Exodus xxxii, 4.

† Exodus xxxii, 25.

‡ Exodus xxxii, 20.

And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet.*

To ascertain a woman's virtue, the prescription was as follows:

And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water:

And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water:

And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.

This was not all; an animal's flesh was also burned and mixed with the water.

And when he hath made her drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled . . . her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.†

If these symptoms did not appear, then the woman was not guilty. But is it believable that, with God at their elbow, constantly answering questions, revealing to them the past and the future, and making all hidden things plain, they needed mixed drinks, or concoctions, to find out whether or not a woman was innocent? And mark you, evidence had no place at all in the Mosaic court. No witnesses were examined, and no testimony taken; it was the mixed preparations that did the work of judge and jury. Is it possible that all this is divine?

Blood, according to the bible, is a great disinfectant. The way to sanctify a man or a people was to sprinkle them with blood.

Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the

* Leviticus xiv, 49-52.

† Numbers v, 11-27.

tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.

And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him.*

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people.†

How does such a practice differ from fetishism? How can blood on the garments have any effect upon the conscience or the intellect? The plea that all this was mere symbolism, if applied also to the rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Hindu or Persian priesthood, would make all religions inspired. The ancient Hindus believed that cow-dung was divinely prescribed for sanctifying purposes. Why was not that, too, mere symbolism? The word symbolism is made to cover a multitude of superstitions. Lacking the courage, and sometimes also the honesty, to say that such ceremonies prove a very low state of culture on the part of the people who observed them, clever theologians not only excuse or defend them, but they even profess to find symbolized in them the mysterious purposes of the infinite. Superstition dies hard.

Even as sprinkling with blood sanctified the people, confessing to a goat secured a pardon from God for sin.

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.‡

* Exodus xxix, 20-21.

† Exodus xxiy, 8.

‡ Leviticus xvi, 21-22.

Could this be the origin of the confessional? The goat ceremony has a wider meaning than the commentators will admit. There were really two goats, upon which Aaron, the priest, cast lots, "one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat."*

The word "scapegoat" is a euphemism; the Hebrew text says *Azazel*. Now this was one of the terrible names of God. Both Jews and Mohammedans believed *Azazel* to be a dread divinity. Milton introduces *Azazel* as the standard-bearer of the fallen hosts of heaven. The Arabs, who are a branch of the Semitic race, paid homage to this celestial, and spoke of him as the counsellor or advocate of Allah who was banished from heaven because when Adam, the first man, appeared upon the scene, he would not bow to him. *Azazel* did not think much of *man*; and it was for that he lost his position. The "scapegoat," then, in the text was none other than his Satanic majesty, the fallen chief of the heavenly hosts — the devil. Setting apart a goat for *Azazel*, or allowing him to share with Jehovah the offering at the altar, gives support to the belief that the Jews worshiped the devil as well as Jehovah. It is plainly stated in other parts of the bible that devil worship was common among the Jews even as late as the time of Rehoboam, who reigned after David and Solomon.† But more light is thrown on the subject of the intimacy between God and Satan in the story of Job.

* Leviticus xvi, 7-8.

† II Chronicles xi, 15: "And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils."

IV.

The Strangest Story in the Bible

ONE of the strangest chapters in the bible is the description of the interview between God and the devil. The interview takes place in heaven. We have already met the devil in Paradise; now we are to find him, as the French say, in a *tête à tête* with Jehovah, at the exclusive headquarters of the latter. There is much reason to believe that these two beings, who seem to be together on important occasions, originally sprang from the same stock, if such a term could be used. Jehovah and Azazel, or Satan, appear to be first cousins. This is the impression of nearly every student who looks into their pedigrees. In the thought of early man God was hardly distinguishable from the devil. The evidence bears out the bible suggestion that at one time God and the devil were on the best of terms, and kept house together. In those days it was really difficult to tell them apart. In the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Chronicles, it is written by "inspiration" that "God moved David to number Israel." In the twenty-fourth chapter, the first verse, of the second book of Samuel, we read that it was *Satan* who moved David to take a census of the nation. There is no inconsistency here. God and Satan belong to the "unknown," and they *pull* together. When, as the bible informs us, there was war in heaven, the two relatives quarreled and parted. And though ever since they have maintained separate quarters, now and then, when there was a reunion of the family, Satan was invited to join the festivities. There is a saying that "blood is thicker

than water," and still another, that "blood will tell." The occasional conferences and exchange of confidences between Jehovah and Satan, as related in the bible, is a confirmation of these popular proverbs.

The instructions given to Aaron about being sure to have two goats, and to let Azazel have the one which fell to his lot, even though it may be the fatter animal, shows the care which Jehovah takes of his ancient comrade and minister. Perhaps this was necessary to keep the peace. At any rate, it is evident that Jehovah was mindful of the rights of Azazel.

But now about the interview between Jehovah and Satan: "Now there was a day," says the bible, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."* Was he, too, one of the Sons of God? It is impossible to read the description of these family gatherings in heaven with Satan also invited, without being impressed with the importance of the devil in the councils of God. Perhaps the *entente cordiale* between Satan and Jehovah is to be explained by the fact that the latter had not found any one among all his ministers who could fill the place made vacant by the resignation of Satan. Jehovah *needed* the devil, and this dependence upon him to carry to a successful issue his most urgent and mysterious decrees was the secret of the deference shown to the devil in these periodical reunions at the throne of God. On one of these occasions, as we have seen, when the children of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan, of course, was there among them. But this was not the only time that

* Job i, 6.

Satan was invited to meet with God. His presence at these gatherings created no surprise, because he had been seen there frequently. But I am not equally sure that the marks of special attention shown to him by the Lord of heaven did not make the saints a little jealous of him. The reports of these meetings in heaven confine themselves exclusively to what transpires between the two principals, God and Satan. The other "sons of God" seem to have acted what in modern parlance would be called "a silent part."

Jehovah inquired of his distinguished guest, the news and whence he came. As the Lord knew all the news himself, and also whence Satan came, he must have asked these questions for the purpose of "drawing him out," to use an expression in vogue among diplomats.

But Satan knew how to keep a secret. He answered his host's question without really telling anything either of the news, or whence he came: "From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it," he replied. If we were not afraid of exposing ourselves to the charge of blasphemy, we would say that this was a *devilish* answer. It said nothing. Evidently Satan wanted God to show his hand first.

"Hast thou considered," asked the Lord, addressing Satan more confidentially, and coming to the point, "my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"*

In all probability the reference to Job was to prove that there was one man, at least, whom the devil had

* Job i, 8.

not yet been able to win over to his side. But the devil had an explanation for his failure to get Job; it was not because Job loved God, but because of the favors God kept showering upon him.

"Doth Job fear God for naught?" he asked. "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? . . . But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."*

This was a challenge. Satan would not allow that there was even one man who loved and served God from choice. To show his confidence in Job, the Lord not only accepted the devil's challenge, but volunteered to hand over his one faithful subject to the tender mercies of the Evil One.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold all that he hath is in thy power.†

Thereupon Satan hurried out in search of his victim. Whether or not the other "children of God" who were present at this reunion, heard this interesting conversation between the two divinities, and who they thought would come out winner in the contest over a denizen of the earth, is not recorded. Job, of course, was not aware of the fact that Jehovah and Satan were throwing dice for his soul. Nor was he consulted whether or not he wanted to be turned over to the devil for the worst drubbing any one ever received. From a human point of view, it was an unspeakable outrage to take a "perfect and upright man" and hand him over to be thrashed within an inch of his life. But there is, the learned doctors of divinity tell us, a dif-

* Job i, 9-11.

† Job i, 12.

ference between human and divine justice. "God's ways are not our ways," as his conduct in this case amply proves.

The devil lost no time in falling upon Job now that he had *carte blanche* to bring his ingenuity into play. He began by attacking Job's property, which the Sabeans carry off. Scarcely has the patriarch reconciled himself to this loss, when word is brought to him that "the fire of God is fallen from heaven," burning up everything that belonged to him in the fields. "The fire of God"? It looks as if Jehovah had not only permitted Satan to ruin Job, if he could, but he was helping him, personally, by sending down fire upon Job's servants and cattle. And what was the fault of these that they, too, should be punished? And why were the sons and daughters of Job killed? For the next messenger tells Job that all his children were destroyed by a terrific windstorm, also sent by God. But it is one thing to ask these questions of a theologian, and another thing to get him to answer them. Despite these terrible blows, however, Job remained loyal to God. Jehovah came out ahead in the first inning. But the game is not over yet.

Another meeting is arranged for between these two powers. Again they meet in heaven. It was a dangerous thing to let the devil into heaven so often, after the experience of Adam and Eve in Paradise, with its dire results, not only to man, but to the son of God himself, whose crucifixion might have been prevented by refusing the devil admittance into Eden. When the devil was seated comfortably next to the deity—or perhaps he was standing—he was asked about Job, who had remained true to God despite the fact that the

latter had delivered him up to the devil. But we will let Jehovah state his own case:

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, *although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.**

Do you know, reader, why I have put in italics the concluding words in the above quotation? It is the most terrible text in all the bible. It is what the lawyers would describe as the most conspicuous instance of self-incrimination on record. In this passage the Lord of heaven and earth makes the frightful admission that he did wrong upon the suggestion of the devil — that he was tempted of the devil to commit a crime! This is staggering. He also admits that the crime was committed against a just man, and without cause! We have in this text a most humiliating picture of the deity — a God obeying the devil! The English language is inadequate to help express the horror, the pity, the indignation, the defiance, the scorn, the sorrow which the spectacle of a God admitting a heinous crime but pleading that the devil moved him to commit it, provokes in me. If I could weep the world into common sense, I would do it; if I could laugh these absurdities and immoralities out of the world's mind and conscience, who would prevent me?

I am really afraid of a God who will take advice from the devil. I am afraid of a God who will cause a "perfect and upright man" to be ruined "without cause," just to win a wager from the devil.

To me, the strangest discovery one makes in the bible is that God and the devil are, to use the nomen-

* Job ii, 3.

clature of the commercial world, business partners. They meet occasionally to discuss policies and to exchange views. Each is mindful of the rights of the other. God would rather see his servant Job ruined than drive the devil out of his presence for moving him to commit a crime. Which is God and which is the devil?

But let us return to the story: Satan was not willing to grant that he had lost, until Job had been punished some more. So he asked for permission to attack Job in his own person:

"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse *thee* to thy face,"* suggested the devil. What did the other partner say to this? Although he had just admitted that he did wrong to an innocent man, to a friend, he is willing to do it again, and this time he consents to be more cruel and unjust than before.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand.†

Like a flash, Satan fell upon Job and smote him "from the sole of his foot unto his crown." Job became a disgusting heap of prurient and carious flesh.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.‡

Thus Job becomes a football between these two gambling divinities. After losing everything, after being deprived of his sons and daughters, he himself is brought down by foul sores and boils to the verge

* Job ii, 4-5.

† Job ii, 6.

‡ Job ii, 9.

of death. Indeed, death would have been preferable to being the toy and plaything of Jehovah-Satan. The preachers defend this loose story and call it inspired, on the ground that it taught Job *patience*. But was there no saner way of teaching him the lesson of patience?

The bible God plays with fire. His attempt to teach Adam obedience cost the damnation of the human race and the death of his own son. He almost tempted Abraham to stick a knife into his own son in trying to make sure of his faith. He tried Jephtha's loyalty, and it cost the latter the life of his young daughter; and to teach Job patience, servants, cattle, sons and daughters — all are slaughtered.

Moreover, if Job was "a perfect and upright man," as the text claims, what need was there of teaching him patience — and at such a cost, too? The clergy, lacking the courage to say that the story of God and Satan, gambling for the soul of Job, is a myth, rack their brains for excuses and apologies to explain its presence in the Word of God. Nor is it true that the story was meant to teach us submission to God, whether he sends good or evil. That is what free-born people would call blasphemy. It is wrong to submit to evil. It is base to kiss the hand that robs us of our rights. We do not deserve freedom if we can endure slavery. Justice is born of the rebellion against wrong, as truth is born of the protest against error. The Asiatic submits; the European rebels. Of that rebellion is born civilization. Prometheus, defying the gods, and not Job, licking the hand that has crushed him, is our inspiration!

I am also aware of the argument of the liberal

clergy, that the book of Job is only a poem. Why not say so, then, in plain print? Why bind an imaginary composition in the same volume with the "infallible word of God?" But, even as the first chapter of Genesis was inspired history until Darwin exposed its untruth, so was the Book of Job inspired history until criticism showed its inherent immorality. As a play, Job is one of the most successful in ancient literature. But what is a *play* doing in the "Holy Bible"?

But my main object in reciting the story of this Arab sheik was to show the family resemblance between the two sovereigns, the one of heaven, the other of hell. In the New Testament, too, Satan figures as a personage of importance, and not at all as one who has been disarmed and degraded. On one occasion Jesus and the devil met in the wilderness. The conversation which took place between them shows the devil was as independent and resourceful with the junior God as he was with Jehovah. According to St. Mathew, the devil picked up the Son of God and flew with him through the air. When he had set him down on the pinnacle of the temple he told him what he wanted. From there he carried Jesus to an exceeding high mountain, so high that from its summit "all the kingdoms of the world" could be seen.* Now a being who could fly through the air with a god tucked away under his arm is not to be slighted.

Satan has gone. Jehovah must follow. Neither can live without the other.

* Matthew iv, 1-12.

PART IV.

I.

God and His Book

WHEN the deity had finished making his world, the bible says that he looked his creation all over, and behold, everything that he had made "was good." He was, according to this report, perfectly pleased with his work. He was proud of the world he had created, for it was made in his own image. But in the very next chapter we read that the first woman God ever made deceived her husband, and the first man deserted his wife, by throwing the blame of his transgression upon her, instead of coming to her defense. And the first son ever born to a mother — Cain — turned out to be a murderer — the murderer of his only brother. And the world itself, which a moment ago had been pronounced good, became so wicked in a short time that it had to be drowned. Who would care to be the author of such a world!

Of course, it will be said that the collapse of God's world was the devil's fault, but where did *he* come from? Why was there a devil in a universe created by God, and in his own image? That is the question against which all theologies dash themselves to pieces. If the deity was powerless against the devil, he could, at least, have refrained from creating a world for the devil to work his mischief in. If you can not remove the quicksand, would you build a house on it?

Moreover, this throwing the blame upon somebody else is the very tactics which Adam and Eve resorted to. But did it help them? When Adam was asked why he ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he threw the blame upon his wife. When the woman was interrogated, she threw the blame upon the serpent, and now when we ask the "Lord God" why his world went to pieces so soon after he had pronounced it perfect, he throws the blame upon the devil. Well, that will not do. If shirking his responsibility did not save Adam nor his innocent progeny — the human race — why should it save the deity?

The story of Cain and Abel is the first episode on earth. The two were brothers. Abel was a shepherd; Cain, a farmer. Surely they needed each other, both commercially and socially. According to the bible, there were altogether only four people in the world, at this time, and, therefore, from every point of view, it was more than a dastardly crime to kill one of the members of this precious group.

What was the cause of the hatred which led to the first bloodshed? Unfortunately these two brothers had a *religion*. But for their religion they would never have hated one another, nor would murder have stained the opening pages of history. Cain offered the Lord for a sacrifice, of the product of his farm; Abel brought to the altar a head or two of cattle. They were both trying to please the Lord, each worshipping him according to his light. Ah! but that is not enough; there is only one worship that is orthodox. All others are *taboo*. God accepts Abel's flesh offering, and rejects Cain's vegetables. Then the trouble begins. The murder of Abel by Cain started the religious per-

secutions which have blackened the face of man. To this source may be traced the inquisitions, the crusades, the wholesale massacres which have made history a horror and a shudder. The first bloodshed was in the name of religion. The first murder was committed at the altar of God. It was a religious difference which defiled with blood the cradle of the human race. But who was responsible for the first murder in the world? The deity! Had God been pleased to accept a vegetable offering with as much pleasure as roasting flesh, or, had he said, "Never mind me; be good to one another," he would have removed thereby the most powerful motive for religious persecution. The Cain and Abel story compels us to say that the first persecutor was the "Lord God" himself.

And how could these two brothers tell that God had accepted one offering and rejected the other? How can men tell to-day that God likes the Catholic worship better than the Protestant or the Moslem? Who can enlighten us on this subject? In the case of Cain and Abel, in all probability, the flesh offering, being oily or fat, burned readily on the altar; while the vegetables, being fresh and wet, or covered with the soil, did not burn as readily, or they smoked instead of going up in a flame, which natural circumstance was seized upon as a supernatural revelation, and made the pretext for the most infamous deed on record — fratricide.

And where did these two brothers get the idea that God was fond either of flesh or of vegetables? That is an interesting question. In the days of ignorance and fear, when the crocodile in the river was a god, it was supposed that the monster had power to hurt people. He must, therefore, be appeased. The rumor

went abroad that the monster was very fond of little children. "Let us throw him a child for his breakfast," suggests a priest. The suggestion is followed. With prayers, incantations, prostrations — with incense, and chants, on stated occasions, the crocodile is presented a child. To bribe the evil powers, to put them in a friendly frame of mind by gifts of food and drink, of song and prayer, in order to turn their wrath into compassion — such was the beginning of human sacrifices. At first the gods were very particular. They demanded human flesh for their breakfast, and not until man was sufficiently strong to make his own terms, did the gods consent to accept the flesh of the animal.

The Deity Demands Human Flesh

THE object of human and animal sacrifices in the bible, as in all the older religions, was to placate the deity. The Jews would not have offered Jehovah the flesh of man and beast, did they not believe that their god was not only exceedingly fond of roast meats, but that this was the only way to secure any favors from him. When an oriental desired a favor of his king or chieftain, he approached him with many gifts, as well as with prostrations and compliments. The way to be admitted to an audience with Jehovah was to praise him loudly, and to offer him the best part of the spoils.

The psychological phase of the institution of sacrifices and worship is very instructive. Even as a child tries to put its father in an amiable state of mind before presenting its petition, the believer's motive in coming

forward with precious gifts — the flesh even of his own little ones — or with elaborate and highly finished compliments, is to throw a spell upon the deity, to charm him, as it were, into granting the petitioner his request. The savage actually believed that the savour of burning flesh, and the sight of palpitating blood shed at the altars, so delighted or intoxicated the deity that almost any favor could be wrested from him while in that condition. The object of the soft hymns and cajoling prayers in the churches to-day have the same purpose for which the sacrifices and dances of the barbarians were instituted. How to charm the deity, to please and engage his services, is the end and aim of every kind of worship.

The word gospel is a combination of *good* and *spell*. To read it, is to become spellbound, according to the teaching of the churches. In the same sense, a prayer-book is a collection of *spells*, to be used in approaching the deity. If we desire rain from him, we must use the petition, or the spell, expressly prepared for that purpose; if we desire good harvests, or success in war, or the removal from the land of the plague or infidelity, we must use other *spells*. "We ask it all in Jesus' name," is the way nearly all prayers close. That is one of the irresistible *spells*. "Ask it in my name," says Jesus, because the belief was current that there was magic in a name. That is to say, some names were *spells*. The word charm comes from the Latin *carmen*. But that is also the word for song or hymn. To sing to a god is to charm him, or bind him with a spell. The purpose of the chants is to *enchant* the deity, that is to say, to intoxicate him with praise, as the savage tried to intoxicate him with his roasts and reeking altars.

The service of the gods was very much more expensive in olden times than now. Men had to part with their own children to keep on good terms with the powers above. But, as often explained, the secular interests of life always act as a check on the follies and absurdities of religion. Instead of throwing his children to the crocodile, or burning them alive upon the altar, the natural affections prevailed upon man to experiment with animal flesh as an offering to his gods. As man developed in power and independence, he compelled the gods to draw up a new contract, or a new testament, which not only forbade human, and later also animal, sacrifices, but allowed an offering of fruit, flowers and vegetables to take the place of flesh and blood at the altars. In each new bargain, the crocodile was the loser and man the gainer. The history of progress is the history of the successive bargains or covenants or testaments between man and the crocodile, or man and the powers he fears, each new contract adding to the rights of man and clipping from the claims of the crocodile. Is not this very interesting? What the Christians or Jews call a progressive religion simply means that God is satisfied with less now, or demands less now, than he was wont to in the days of man's ignorance and impotence.

The yoke of Jehovah is very much easier and not at all so pinching as formerly. His ten thousand categorical commandments, his *taboos*, his long list of ceremonial observances of new moons and Sabbaths, and the mysteries and dogmas which had to be accepted upon penalty of excommunication and damnation, have been one after the other discarded as non-essentials, with the result that one may now join either the Chris-

tian or the Jewish church upon one's own terms — and this they call being *liberal*.

What a blessing has Rationalism been even to the churches! It has saved them from shedding the blood of their children, saved them their domestic animals, and saved also the waste of their garden products, for the gods now get nothing but “words” for an offering. The deity, who at one time turned away from Cain's vegetable and fruit offering, and preferred the smell of roasting flesh, is now glad enough to get a few verbal compliments once a week.

But in the bible, God has not yet heard of “reformed” Judaism or of “liberal” Christianity, and hence he will accept nothing less than human and animal sacrifices. “Let me have blood, and more blood,” is the refrain of revelation. How many of the believers in the bible are aware that God demanded by the mouth of Moses the first born of his people? Not only did he slay the first born of Egypt, but he also insisted upon having for himself the first fruits of the womb, as well as of the land of the chosen people.

Notwithstanding no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, *both of man* and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall *surely be put to death*.*

And Nehemiah relates how the faithful Jews, those who did not follow the example of the heathen, continued under all circumstances to bring “the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruits of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord: Also the

*Leviticus xxvii, 28, 29.

first born of our sons (daughters not acceptable), and of our cattle, as is written in the law.”*

And this is the book that must be circulated by the millions as the greatest and best in all the world! Even as the Old Testament demanded the sacrifice of the sons of the people, the New Testament demands the sacrifice of the Son of God. Look at the animal about to be bound and made ready for the knife of the priest. See its struggles and hear its moan! But that is nothing compared to the piteous wail of the human child torn from its parents’ arms to be offered as a sacrifice to the crocodile! Nay, behold the agony of Christ on the cross and listen to his heartrending cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” If God failed to hear thee, O Jesus! humanity has heard thy prayer, and there shall be no more murder on the altars of the crocodile!

The story of how Abraham was *tempted*, as it is said, to sacrifice his son to Jehovah, is well known. Abraham did not object at all. Neither was he shocked, or surprised, when commanded to kill his own son. It does not seem to have been an unusual thing for Jehovah to demand human flesh for his diet. Abraham started to do as his religion required of him. That is my complaint against religion. It makes a man willing to commit any crime under heaven in the name of God! And there is not an American clergyman who has the courage to say that such a commandment—requiring a father to butcher his son—should never have been given, or that, having been given, it should be stricken out of the bible. And had Abraham been a

* Nehemiah x, 35, 36.

man, he would have become an out and out Atheist before he would have tied his little boy hand and foot and pulled out his knife!

But the clergyman is on hand with his excuses. He has no arguments, he has only *excuses*. God was only trying Abraham's faith, he tells us. Indeed! Did not the deity know in advance how Abraham would act under the circumstances? "Is it not true," ask again, the defenders of the bible, "that Abraham was not allowed to destroy his son, Isaac?" Yes, but God allowed Jephthah to kill his *daughter*! The story of this unfortunate father is told in the following verses:

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

Jehovah accepted the bargain and gave Jephthah the victory.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter!

Then the poor man explains to his child the vow he had made unto the Lord. The young woman was willing to be offered up as a "burnt offering" unto the Lord, if she could have two months' time to wander about and bewail her sad fate.

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, *who did with her* according to his vow which he had vowed.*

Why should Americans have anything to do with

* Judges xi, 30-39.

an Asiatic cult which tempts a father to kill the son that had called him *papa*, or which actually permits a father to burn alive his only child — the child that ran to greet him with a kiss? There was a good excuse to burn the clothes, or the timbrels with which Jephtha's daughter ran to meet her father, instead of the young lady herself. A good argument could have been made that the first object the returning general saw was the timbrels in her hand, but the Lord would not accept anything less than human flesh in those days.

There are many other examples in the "Holy Bible" as objectionable as those already mentioned. Frequently the only way to turn away the "wrath of God" from the people, was to hang a few heads against the sun, or massacre a whole community, children included, or to draw the sword upon the members of one's own family. What does the reader think of all this — in the bible! Why are not men ashamed to print and distribute twenty million copies a year of a book so foreign to the best feelings of our age and country? Why should such a book be forced into our homes and schools, or placed in the hands of our little ones immediately after they have left their cradles? Why should there be a copy of this book in every room of every hotel in the land?

Before dismissing this subject it would be well to point out that the long practice of human and animal sacrifices is responsible for the cruelty to children and animals in modern times. Humanity to our dumb neighbors has not been one of the distinguished virtues of either Jews or Christians, and though we live in the twentieth century we have to support societies specially devoted to preventing cruelty to children. In the same

way associations have been organized to protect animals against mistreatment.

That the bible gives little thought to the rights of animals may be inferred not only from St. Paul's rather brutal exclamation, "Does God care for the oxen?" but also from the practice among the Jews to this day, of tormenting an animal before killing him for food. In the *Humane Review*, an eye witness of the Jewish method of slaughter to provide *Kosher* meat for the market gives the following description of the operation:

As soon as the animal has been brought into the slaughtering chamber it is thrown to the ground either by attaching a rope or chain to the legs and then suddenly hauling on it, or by twisting the head upward and sideways by means of an appliance attached to the horns and passing under the jaw, in such a way that the animal loses its balance and falls to the ground, in doing which it not infrequently injures itself so that there is loss of blood or fracture of horn or rib. The animal is then rendered powerless by having its feet bound together, or the tail drawn through the hind legs forward and upward, while one of the slaughtermen places his foot on the animal's stomach and prevents its attempting to offer resistance. The head is then forced down so that it rests on the horns, and the nose is pressed against the floor. This can only be done by the exertion of great force on the part of the slaughtermen, with corresponding resistance, involving terror and suffering on that of the animal. The Jewish official who performs the act of slaughter then passes his hand over the animal's tightly drawn throat, and mutters the so-called "Schechita" prayer. He then cuts the animal's throat right through the vertebræ, drawing the knife to and fro in so doing. The blood which spurts from the severed arteries is scattered like rain by the breath which escapes from the lungs, and as the breath is drawn in it enters the gullet and lungs with a loud rattling noise. The gaping wound yawns wide, the animal opens and closes its eyes, rolling them to and fro, and opens and shuts its mouth as though gasping for breath. If the flow of blood from the arteries in the neck ceases, one of the slaughtermen—not the Jewish official—draws them out, cuts away part of them with the surrounding tissues, and throws the severed portion away. And while all this is going on the animal is alive and conscious of pain and terror.

II.

The Portrait of God in the Bible

TO prove the charge that the bible God is quite unfit for modern purposes, we have only to open the "holy" book at almost any page to find such positive commandments as the following emanating from him:

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*

Slaughter on a small scale, or at intervals, does not seem to satisfy the bible deity. Like a vortex, he cries for more, *more*.

But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, *thou shalt save alive* nothing that breatheth:

But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.†

We would never have thought of calling attention to these gory pages but for the protection of our homes and schools, which the clergy insist should be placed under bible influence and instruction. And they have all the money and prestige in the world to force this book into our homes, and will do so if they catch the modern world napping for a moment.

It is not only the heathen that are put to the edge of the sword, but the Jews themselves are repeatedly

* I Samuel, xv, 3.

† Deuteronomy xx, 16, 17.

slaughtered on the flimsiest pretext. When the people expressed any disagreement or complaint, or offered any criticism, they were "consumed" by the fire of the Lord.* When the Jews longed for a change of diet, and remembered the better food they enjoyed in the land of Egypt, the anger of the Lord was kindled:

And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp. . . . And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.†

When he was less angry, he "sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."‡ On one occasion nothing less than the massacre of five hundred thousand of his own chosen people would restore his good temper.§ Is there any strong reason why a book containing such demoralizing stories should be translated into every language and carried into every country under the sun? And is it not time for the American people to shut this "holy" book out of their homes, as it is already shut out of their public schools?

Not only did the commandments to kill and destroy proceed from the deity, but the bible represents him as angry when his agents show any pity or weakness in carrying out his designs. Saul is dethroned for sparing the cattle of the people he had been sent by the Lord to destroy. But Saul spared the best of the cattle, after he had destroyed all the men, women and children "to sacrifice unto the Lord." By doing this he had hoped to please the Lord, but not so. "It repented me," says Jehovah, "that I have set up Saul

* Numbers xi, 1.

† Numbers xi, 4-6, 31-33.

‡ Numbers, xxi, 6.

§ II Chronicles, xiii, 17.

to be king." David, on the other hand, was after "God's own heart," because he was made of sterner stuff. As this bible character is often held up as a pattern, and as children are expected to love David as one of the best and holiest men in the bible — of whom Jesus was descended — it may not be amiss to recite a few of the stories in which this "man of God" figured so prominently. In David we see the picture of his God. My hand really trembles as I write the following verse:

And he (David) brought out the people that were in it, and *cut them with saws*, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon.*

Could anything be more repugnant to civilized races than such unnecessary inhumanity? We are trying to introduce a milder form of capital punishment than hanging, but surely it is not the bible that has softened our manners. I have so much faith in the saving common sense of the average American or European that I believe if they would only read the bible, and become better acquainted with it, they would not hesitate to do all in their power, even if it involved much personal inconvenience and loss, to break forever the power of these Semitic tales of war and plunder. Is there no more courage left in the world? "Oh, but nobody believes in these parts of the bible any more." Very well, then, why print and *sell* them at the rate of twenty million copies a year? But let us continue the story of David:

And he . . . put them under saws . . . and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln.†

* I Chronicles, xx, 3.

† II Samuel, xii, 31.

“And made them pass through the brick-kiln.”

Well! and is that in the bible? If the Lord could not prevent such barbarity, could he not have prevented, at least, the publishing of such criminal details? The American public is about to pass a law prohibiting the newspapers from entering into the details of the daily murders and other horrible crimes they report. It is claimed, and justly, that such particular descriptions of acts of cruelty and shame familiarize the young, especially, with the worst phases of life, and by suggestion lead them astray. But the bible sins in this respect more flagrantly than any modern journal, not excepting the *yellowest* of them. Written, on the whole, by barbarians who lived in an age of brigandage and massacre, the bible not only gives details of crime which would not be tolerated in any modern publication, but, what is infinitely more injurious to the cause of morality, it sets upon unmentionable acts of cruelty and debauchery the stamp of divine approval. Once more, I repeat that I would never have devoted any labor to the discussion of the contents of the bible, if it were not that this is the great idol of the civilized world to-day — this the “holy” book, the reading of which it is the desire of the churches to make compulsory in the home and the school, and this the word of God without which, it is claimed, there can be no morality!

Even as there is a movement to purge the daily newspapers of offensive details of lawlessness and crime, there is also a movement to clear the billboards of objectionable displays and advertisements, and the theaters of such plays and moving pictures as offend good taste and corrupt the manners of young and old.

Still another worthy effort is in the direction of omitting from children's schoolbooks descriptions of war and carnage, in order to win them over to the nobler cause of peace. But why do not good men and women, who have bravely undertaken these needed reforms, try their hand also on the Jewish-Christian bible? I challenge these reformers, who would expunge from children's text-books the descriptions of battles and slaughters, to find a single passage in the secular history of Europe and America which can compare with the descriptions of David's divine method of warfare.

And thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.*

"Unto all the cities." Goodness! It is not only upon one or two special offenders that these atrocities are practiced, but upon "all the cities." And think of the state of heart and mind of a man that could be such a monster! But there is something more appalling still: think of the head and heart of the people of the twentieth century who *dare* not denounce such barbarities because they are in the *bible*, and who translate these details into every language under the sun for edification in morals!

Of course, there are also many "good things" in the bible, but if all the good editorials in newspapers can not atone for or justify the publication of offensive matter in other columns of the paper, why should the "good things in the bible" be quoted to cover up or excuse such terrible passages as those quoted above? And if it be said that neither Jews nor Christians approve of all the things in the bible, I ask, again, why

* II Samuel xii, 31.

then do they go on translating and disseminating the book without expunging the objectionable parts? If they have the courage to so rewrite the history of nations, or report the news of the world, as to omit all wanton descriptions of brutal and vulgar conduct, why have they not the courage to put the bible through the same purifying process? Who or what are they afraid of?

A Bible Saint

THE story of David, which is placed in children's hands for their edification, is really that of a brigand, the *personnel* of whose followers is given in the following words:

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he (David) became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.*

Led by their "holy" captain, they went about to murder and plunder. Hiding themselves in caves and mountain fastnesses, they became a terror to people laboring in the fields or traveling from place to place. These freebooters, naturally enough, preferred going with David to staying at home to be sued for unpaid bills. So "every one that was in debt" joined the robber band. The thoroughness with which David and his marauders did their work won for them the favor of Jehovah.

And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David.†

* I Samuel xxii, 2.

† I Samuel xxvii, 11.

David never did anything without first consulting the Lord. He was not only cruel, but he was also a coward, for unless his God positively assured him of victory, he would not fight. The way he ascertained the mind of the Lord shows him to have been as superstitious as he was unmerciful and cowardly. And this is the Saint David — the flower of Judaism and Christianity combined! Religion has so perverted the judgment of men that they admire in the bible what they would despise anywhere else.

And David said to Abiathar, the priest . . . I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*

An *ephod* was a cloak made according to the instructions of God, and worn by the priest. David consulted the cloak, and the cloak answered him. Perhaps there was some one in the cloak; at any rate the cloak spoke. David evidently had other gods besides Jehovah and the *ephod*, whom he kept at his home for consultation. On one occasion his wife Michal placed one of these domestic gods in David's bed, to mislead his pursuers.† But his gods, big or small, did not object to his barbarities:

Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law.‡

Do parents desire their children to read such impure stories?

* I Samuel xxx, 7, 8.

† I Samuel xix, 13.

‡ I Samuel xviii, 27.

David puts the scalping Indians to shame. On one occasion, after God had greatly blessed him and given him the throne of Israel, David, who had already hundreds of wives and concubines, caught sight of the wife of one of his soldiers. To possess her, he coolly planned, and, without scruple, caused to be executed one of the meanest murders on record, that of the husband of the woman he coveted. The only person punished for this act of David was the innocent babe born of the crime. What justice!

From this time on, David became, if anything, more offensive in his conduct than ever before. Having escaped punishment for the foul murder of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, he caused to be hanged seven of the sons and grandsons of his ancient rival, Saul, on the pretext that the three years' famine in the land would terminate by this sacrifice. Indeed, he had consulted the Lord before hanging these innocent youths, with the result that, immediately after the seven corpses fell to the ground "before the Lord," the famine ceased.* It is curious how the deity always agrees with a powerful king or emperor. Kaiser, czar, and sultan always obey God, because he never tells them to do anything they do not want to do, and because he always approves of what they desire to do. Kings and emperors have the deity under perfect control.

Such was David's unrelenting spite that, when on his death-bed, he extracted a promise from his successor to the throne never to forgive or to show mercy to any one that had ever offended him. Mentioning his enemy by name, "his hoar head bring thou down to the

* II Samuel xxi, 1-9.

grave with blood," he hissed, as he expired.* It would be perfectly safe to say that there is not another character of equal prominence in history, with so many vices and so few virtues, as that of David, concerning whom it is said that "he was a man after God's own heart," and to whom is given the highest praise in the bible by the deity himself:

My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes.†

III

The Bible and Judaism

IT is in examining the fundamental teachings of Judaism that we discover the blighting influence of the bible upon Jewish thought and conduct. In all the Old Testament there is not even a suggestion that it is a duty to love the Gentile, or to treat him justly at least. Judaism believed the world outside Israel lost, and *rejoiced* in it.

To Judaism the Gentile was not worth saving. A stranger might of his own accord, seeing the light of Israel, unite himself with the people of God, but it was no part of the Jewish religion to concern itself about the balance of mankind. Moses Mendelsohn, in an otherwise admirable letter to the celebrated French theologian Lavater, who had sought to convert him to Christianity, says that the religion of the Jew takes no thought of the salvation of people outside Israel:

* I Kings ii, 9.

† I Kings xiv, 8.

“The religion of my fathers does not wish to be extended . . . Our rabbis unanimously teach that the written and oral laws which form conjointly our revealed religion are obligatory on our nation only.” The bible then does not concern itself about enlightening any other people than the Jews. Not only all attempts to spread abroad the truths of revelation are strictly forbidden, but the Gentile who, of his own accord even, asks to share with the Jew the blessings of his religion is to be rejected. “Our rabbis,” continues Mendelsohn in this same letter, “. . . enjoin us to dissuade by forcible remonstrances every one who comes forward to be converted.” Evidently, then, Judaism was never meant for humanity at large. It was the religion of a *tribe*. People speak of the mission or the message of Judaism; but how could a religion have a message for mankind when it recognized no mankind outside Israel? Was not the doctrine of a chosen people, which is the *spina dorsa* of the bible, the negation of human brotherhood? Was not its severe prohibition of intermarriage calculated to keep the Jew separate and an alien in every land?

The bible-writers were shrewd enough to know that nothing would end their régime, or overthrow all race and creed wars by which that authority was maintained, quicker than intermarriage, and hence they did not hesitate to denounce it as an act of national suicide. It is a pity that after many hundred years of residence among Gentiles, the hold of the bible on the Jews in respect to getting into intimate relations with people not of their own faith and race is as firm as ever. In a Jewish catechism, in use in their Sunday-schools, we read:

Q. What other ordinances has God made to prevent our falling into sin?

A. Those which forbid our associating with bad men or intermarrying with wicked and idolatrous nations.

The child is thus taught to look upon all non-Jews as "wicked and idolatrous," and forming relations with them as "falling into sin."

This is supported by a text from the bible. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son," etc.*

A religion which forbids a man to marry the woman he loves because she is of a different faith is a separatist religion.

Another question in this Jewish catechism reads: "Are we commanded still to keep ourselves distinct from other nations?"

To which the child answers, "Assuredly," etc. Observe the word "still," in the question, which shows the old law is as binding as ever. How can the rabbis justify such unfriendly teaching? And how reconcile it with their protests against anti-Semitism? If the Gentile will not take the Jew into his club, the Jew shuts his home to the Gentile. But why should not a Jew marry a Gentile? Moses and Ezra will not allow it? And why should the twentieth century be bound by Moses and Ezra? How can God be a universal father, and all peoples his children, if it is a crime deserving of death, as the bible plainly announces in many places, for one of his children to love another not of the same faith? This is the negation of brotherhood in the holiest sense of the word. The Catholic who denies salvation to all outside his church is not worse than the

* Deuteronomy vii, 3.

orthodox Jew. The Hebrew who has the courage to marry the woman he loves, in spite of all the theological fulminations of Moses and Ezra, does more to bring Israel into intimate fellowship with the world of to-day and more to unite all races in the bonds of brotherhood than all the rabbis of Jewry. The way to free Israel is to educate the Jew away from the rabbi, and, *entre nous*, rabbi is only another name for priest.

The bible evidently does not believe either in equality or in brotherhood. Will it be right to allow the teachers in our public schools, where all races and creeds are wrapped in the folds of one flag, to read from a book that teaches the boys and girls, who will be the men and women of the future, to hate one another? And yet the bible is guilty, we regret to say, of that very crime. Not only does it make it a capital crime for a Jew to love a Gentile, but he must not even be "on the square" with him.

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother. . . .
Unto a *stranger* thou mayest lend upon usury.*

Evidently the *stranger* is not a brother, else why does it say again:

Of the children of the strangers . . . shall ye buy . . . they shall be your bondmen forever: but over your brethren the children of Israel ye shall not rule one over another with vigor.†

and again:

Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien.‡

To give or to sell putrid flesh to the Gentile, or the

* Deuteronomy xxiii, 19, 20.

† Leviticus xxv, 45, 46.

‡ Deuteronomy xiv, 21.

Gom, is that the way to educate and prepare the world for brotherhood?

The defenders of the bible have often pleaded that the wars of extermination in the bible had for their object the preservation of the chosen people from idolatrous associations. To keep pure the religion revealed from above it was necessary, it is argued, to kill and destroy the surrounding races and forbid the Jews under severe penalties from entering into close relations with them. But how does selling bad meat to the Gentiles help to preserve the purity of a religion? How does enslaving the stranger contribute to the same end? If it is association with the Gentile that is feared, why were the Jews permitted to buy slaves of them and live with them in the same house or field? And how does lending money upon usury to the stranger help to protect the divine religion from contamination? Candidly speaking, it is difficult to see how anybody with a touch of the spirit of love and humanity in his breast can believe in the Old Testament. The fall of the bastille did not mark the dawn of a better day for France more than the fall of the bible will for both Jews and Gentiles.

One of the most hopeful signs of the day is that the cultivated Jew has completely broken away from the religion of his ancestors. The synagogues are even emptier than the churches. Of course, this has greatly alarmed the orthodox element. Recently the junior rabbi of the wealthiest New York synagogue,* in a sermon, on the first day of Passover, publicly attacked the Rationalists among the Jews, and held them responsible

* Temple Emanuel.

for the disrepute into which has fallen the religion of the bible :

The old tree that brought forth many beauteous blossoms is almost stripped of its foliage, and one by one the golden autumn leaves are falling as the older men and women of the congregation pass to their rest. There is no springtime here. It is the winter that is before us. For we have no youth, no young Jews and Jewesses to take the place of the elders. Let each family of the congregation ask itself where the young are, and the answer will be — not within the synagogue, but outside of it, indifferent to it; and faithless and disloyal to Judaism!

Continuing his wail, the rabbi said :

Look among you! Your sons and your daughters, many of them, are marrying outside of their people. They are rearing their children with all modern accomplishments, but with no religion. Their homes are bare of piety and of the spirit of prayer. Some of them perhaps are engaged in charitable work, but the work of charity is a negative work at the best, and with our young men and women it is very seldom carried on in the spirit of Jewish brotherhood, but rather in a spirit of remote pity mingled with disdain. Are you satisfied with this result of your reform of Judaism?

Of course, when this rabbi speaks of religion he means Judaism; and when he speaks of brotherhood, he means "Jewish brotherhood." It is as impossible to make Judaism tolerant, as it is Christianity. Fortunately, many of the fellow Jews of this rabbi did not hesitate to combat a teaching which aims to hold the Jews back while the whole world is moving forward. Why should the Jew remain an Asiatic in religious thought and practice? It may be to the profit of the rabbi to keep the Jew tied to the apron strings of the past, and to prevent his exodus from the wilderness of Sinai, but what spells prosperity for the rabbi or the priest spells ruin for the people. Look at Ireland. The priests wear gold chains and live in palatial residences — they increase and multiply — while Ireland is depopu-

lated and wasted to the bone. Not until both Catholic and Jew dare to disobey their priests, do they begin to prosper and enjoy the liberties and blessings of life. As a Jewish scholar expresses it, the question is not whether or not the Jews shall embrace Christianity or remain Jews, but whether they shall be Asiatic or American.

IV

Bible and Talmud

ANOTHER way of showing how the Old Testament has injured the thought and conduct of the Jewish race — as it has of all other races which have accepted its authority, although, not to the same extent, for the obvious reason that they have wandered from its teaching more freely and daringly than the Jews — would be by examining Jewish religious literature, especially the Talmud.

The rank and file of the orthodox Jews regard the Talmud with almost as great a reverence as the Old Testament. Even by advanced rabbis it is regarded as the best commentary on Mosaic morals and ritual. The Talmud is to the Jews what the decisions and interpretations of church councils are to the Catholics. The Talmud has been called the "Revelation on the Lip," that is to say, the unwritten word of God. For an intelligent understanding of Judaism, a knowledge of the Talmud is as indispensable as that of the Old Testament. We will make a few quotations here to show that the Talmud goes even beyond the Old Testament, if that were possible, in regarding the Gentile as an

enemy, instead of as a brother. Many among the Jews are as ignorant of the contents of the Talmud, as many among the Christians are of the contents of the bible. Let me reproduce a few of the Talmudic texts:

If the ox of an Israelite bruise the ox of a Gentile, the Israelite is exempt from paying damages; but should the ox of a Gentile bruise the ox of an Israelite, the Gentile is bound to recompense him in full.*

If one finds lost property in a locality where the majority are Israelites, he is bound to proclaim it, but he is not bound to do so if the majority be Gentiles.†

If one who intends to kill a Gentile, he slay an Israelite . . . he shall be free.‡

An alien forfeits the right to his own property in favor of the Jews.§

Rabbi Shemuel says advantage may be taken of the mistakes of a Gentile. He once bought a gold plate as a copper of a Gentile for four *zouzim*, and then cheated him out of one *zouz* in the bargain. Rabbi Cahana says that he swindled a Gentile, while the Gentile assured him that he confidently trusted to his honesty.**

It is also expressly urged (*Bava Kama*, fol. 113, col. 1), to resort to false and adroit pretexts to secure the acquittal of a guilty Jew. Compare this from the "people of God" with the following from a Pagan poet:

If ever called
To give thy witness in a dubious case,
Though Phalaris himself should bid thee lie
On pain of torture in his flaming bull,
Disdain to barter *innocence* for life,
To *which* life owes its luster and its worth.††

Doctor Edersheim quotes the following from the Talmud:

The best of the Gentiles kill; the best among serpents, crush its head.

* *Talmud, Bava Kame*, fol. 38, col. 1.

† *Bava Metzia*, fol. 24, col. 1.

‡ *Sanhedrin*, fol. 78, col. 2.

§ *Bava Kama*, fol. 38, col. 1.

** *Bava Kama*, fol. 118, col. 2.

†† *Juvenal*, Sat. 8, 1, 80.

Now this is the book which is to the orthodox Jew in Poland and Russia what the Pope is to the Italian and Spanish peasantry. That it is binding upon the conscience of every believing Jew may be inferred from the following:

Whosoever transgresses any of the sayings of the scribes is guilty of death.*

The Talmud with its twelve large folio volumes, represents the national literature of the Jews for a long period of time. What its worth is, aside from the few scattered passages quoted above, may be seen from the following estimate:

But yet I venture to say that it would be impossible to find less wisdom, less eloquence and less high morality, imbedded in a vaster bulk of what is utterly valueless to mankind—to say nothing of those parts of it which are indelicate and even obscene—than in any other national literature of the same extent.†

But what Canon Farrar says of the Talmud could with equal truth be said of the bulk of the bible. The Jews could ask for no better illustration of the baneful influence of the bible upon their national literature for long centuries than the worthless character of the Talmudic writings.

It would have been a real miracle for the Jews to have developed a great literature, or to have created a great civilization like that of the Hellens or the Latins, with an infallible bible, and its offspring, the Talmud, blocking their progress on every side. It is interesting to note that the only races of antiquity which blossomed morally, as well as intellectually, are those which had no *revelation* to hamper their free movements or to

* *Eiruv*, fol. 21, col. 2.

† Dean Farrar, in *A Talmudic Miscellany*.

stunt their growth. The unfortunate Jews went through life carrying the burden of Jehovah. The Greeks made sport of their gods; Jehovah made sport of the Jews.

If in modern times the Jews have produced first-class scholars in nearly every branch of the activities of the mind, it is because, like the glorious Spinoza, the heretic Jew who was cursed and expelled from the synagogue, they have divorced barren Judaism and "taken for spouse" science — the only redeemer that *redeems*. I sincerely hope — and there are many signs that this hope will be realized in the not distant future — that even as the French after centuries of submission to Rome threw off its yoke and came out of Catholicism into modern thought — not a few individuals only, but the best part of the nation — government and all; and as Spain, the most Catholic country in the world, is preparing to follow the example of France; and as noble little Portugal has just reasoned and voted itself out of the papacy into freedom of thought and action, I earnestly hope that the Jews, too, after untold centuries of intellectual bondage to an Asiatic religion, which is inimical to culture and humanity, will come out of the synagogue *en masse*, thereby registering their protest against both bible and Talmud, and proving, as the French have done, for instance, that they are great enough to change their religion.

The fear that the decline of Judaism will bring about national disintegration is without foundation. If the Jew is an American in America, an Englishman in England, a German in Germany — how can his withdrawal from Judaism affect his nationality? Is Judaism the name of a nation or of a religion? It is argued

that the Jews are compelled to cling to one another, and to keep together in a body, because of the general prejudice against them. Will I be forgiven if I were to say that Judaism is largely responsible for this fearful prejudice. Is there a text in bible or Talmud, which any rabbi could quote, to prove that Jew and Gentile should love and respect one another and dwell together in fraternal relations, taking and giving in marriage, as though they were one people? Produce such a text! And if there be not, is it any wonder that the Gentile, the world over, and in all the ages, has looked upon the Jew as an alien? It is not true that the cause of the prejudice against the Jew is the charge that his ancestors crucified Christ. That is a foolish argument. It is invented by the rabbis to throw dust into the eyes of inquirers. Then why did the ancient Romans, long before Christ, entertain a prejudice against the Jews? The Latin authors explained the reason for the prejudice: It was the religious scruple of the Jew against mingling cordially and honestly with people other than his own. Judaism shut up the Jew in his shell. To come in contact with a non-Jew, to treat him, in every respect, as a brother, was blasphemy. Is it any wonder that Cicero, writing about the Jews, said that the Romans were better acquainted with the Hindus who lived thousands of miles away, than with the Jews who lived next door to them? It was the exclusiveness of the Jew which created and which, alas, prevents from dying, the prejudice against them. It is far from my purpose to contend that this is the only source of the ill-feeling between Jew and Christian, but I am confident that were the Jews to abandon Judaism, an Asiatic religion which will not assimilate modern thought, and

abandon also such rites and ceremonies which are unbecoming to a civilized people, and enter into the most intimate domestic relations with their neighbors, in a few generations the ugly sectarian and racial prejudices, lacking their daily nourishment, will waste away and die. "Ah, but if we do that, we will lose our Judaism," says the rabbi. Keep your Judaism, if you prefer it to humanity. Of course, the Christians, too, must outgrow their exclusive religion. But my point is that the Christians, as in France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and America are coming out of the old faiths *en masse*, while there is as yet no such definite movement among the Jews. True enough, here and there one meets a Jew who has all but repudiated Judaism. As a representative of this class is the writer of the article on Judaism in *Chambers' Encyclopædia* — Doctor Krauskopf, of Philadelphia. This gentleman almost completely strips Judaism of all its biblical and Talmudic features. The program put forth by him is of so very radical a character as hardly to deserve the title of Judaism. It comes near leaving out supernaturalism altogether.

"We discard," says Doctor Krauskopf, "the belief in a God who is a man magnified, who has his abode somewhere in the interstellar spaces. We discard the belief that the bible was written by God, or by man under the immediate dictation of God, and that its teachings are therefore infallible. . . . We discard the belief in the coming of a human Messiah who will lead us back to Palestine, establish us as the rulers of the world, and make all nations tributaries to us. We discard the belief in bodily resurrection, hell-torments, Paradisian rewards, prophecy, superstitions, all biblical

and rabbinical beliefs, rites and ceremonies and institutions, which neither elevate nor sanctify our lives.”*

Another step, and Judaism will be swallowed up in Rationalism.

Will Judaism take that other step? The Jew will; but I fear that Judaism will not. Like Christianity and every other form of organized religion, Judaism is too aged to put forth new shoots. Abandon it, is my earnest suggestion. It has hurt the Jew. Judaism has made the Jew narrow and anti-social. At a Jewish Congress held at Basle in 1898, Doctor Mandelstam, Professor in the University of Kiev, said: “The Jews energetically reject the idea of fusion with other nationalities, and cling firmly to their historical hope—that is, of a world empire.” Again, Dr. Leopold Kahn, the Vienna rabbi, in 1901 declared that “the Jew will never be able to assimilate himself; he will never adopt the customs and ways of other peoples. The Jew remains Jew under all circumstances. Every assimilation is purely exterior.”†

The educated Jews everywhere should combat such bigotry. If the Jewish people desire universal respect and equality, they must fuse with other people, which they can only do by coming out of the ancient oriental wilderness. To say that the Jews energetically reject the idea of “fusion with other nationalities,” is to expose them to the charge that they are the sworn enemies of the human race. Rabbis, beware!

During the recent Race Congress in London, Mr. H. Snell spoke as follows on this important question:

* *On the Progress of Liberty of Thought*, C. E. Plumptre, page 71.

† *Ethical World*, August, 1911.

Regarding the question from the standpoint of ethical internationalism, it is not the Jew, but Judaism, that is at fault. As a citizen pursuing his daily avocation, sharing in the duties and responsibilities of the common life, the Jew is the equal of his English neighbor, and should be so regarded. He is a reliable business man, a loyal comrade and a good friend. The Jew in the synagogue is a totally different matter. It is the curse of organized religion that it divides men from their fellows, and engenders strife rather than harmony. The moment the orthodox Jew remembers his Judaism, he ceases to be one with the nation in which he lives, and he falls back upon those racial prejudices which certainly perpetuate, even if they did not actually create, the aversion with which he is regarded. It is, I repeat, not the citizen Jew, but the theocratic Jew and the financial Jew, that constitutes the problem. No people can expect to be loved when they, through their habits and institutions, openly deride the institutions and customs of the nations under whose laws they live. The orthodox Jew is not an Englishman or a German, even though he may happen to have been born in the countries named. In so far as he obeys the Jewish law he represents a firm, isolated, yet international political unity, having as its goal the dominancy of the Jewish people. The land in which he lives does not appear to count. The Jewish people become a State within a State, living their own life, and cutting themselves off from the customs and ideals of the populations among whom they exist, and through whom they attain to material comfort. The Jew will not eat or drink with his Gentile neighbors; their marriage laws are not good enough for him; he regards marriage with any one outside his race with horror; he will not accept the day of rest enjoined by the peoples among whom he dwells for his own Sabbath, but makes one day's rest in seven practically impossible for large sections of the people by insisting upon a special day of his own. It is this senseless isolation of Judaism, and its badly concealed contempt for the Gentile, that make the change of attitude toward the Jew so difficult.

The prejudice against the Jew is one of the most degrading things in modern life. Such is the solidarity of humanity that what hurts one is bound to hurt also the other. But we see no solution of the Jewish problem except in the complete emancipation of the Jew from Judaism, and of the Christian from Christianity. Reason will unite what religion has put asunder.

V

The Masterpiece of the Bible—
Solomon's Temple

THE masterpiece of the bible was Jerusalem. The proudest building in the "holy city" was Solomon's temple. Both Jehovah and his people exerted themselves to do their utmost to build a temple that was to be the envy of all ages and peoples. Preparations for its erection were begun in the reign of David, to whom God gave untold wealth. It is related in the bible that—

David the king . . . prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents* of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal . . . Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribe of Israel . . . offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.†

Here then was a sum which in our money would run up to about three hundred millions of dollars. We are not going to ask how the chief of a petty tribe, in one of the poorest and most barren parts of Asia, could, at so remote a time, raise so enormous a fund; our desire is only to show the elaborate preparations undertaken for the erection of Solomon's temple. But this is not the only reference to the big sums of money and other precious things which David collected for the

* Cruden makes a talent of gold about \$35,000, and a talent of silver about \$2,000.

† I Chronicles xxix, 1-7.

temple, which was to be the glory of Jerusalem. Elsewhere in the bible we read:

Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight.*

This was fabulous wealth. David must have had a gold mine of miraculous proportions. Mongredien, as quoted by G. W. Foote, of England, estimates that the total value of all the gold and silver of every sort in the British Isles barely amounts to seven hundred millions of dollars, and David, the bible says, raised, "in my trouble," when times were not very prosperous, three thousand and six hundred millions in gold, and nearly two thousand and two hundred millions in silver. For no other building were such preparations ever made.

But money alone was not all that was needed. A wise king, indeed the wisest that ever sat on a throne, if the bible is to be believed, appeared just at this time to take charge of the building of the temple. The Lord asked Solomon to draw upon him for whatever he wanted. "Ask what I shall give thee,"† he said. Solomon asked for wisdom, and got very much more.

And God said to him . . . I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee. And I have also given thee . . . both riches and honour.‡

Thus equipped Solomon took up the work of preparation for the building of a suitable monument to Jeho-

* I Chronicles xxii, 14.

† I Kings iii, 5.

‡ I Kings iii, 11-14.

vah, which his father, David, had begun. One of the first things Solomon did was to put thirty thousand men to the task of gathering material for the construction of the temple. For the space of four years this crowd of men traveled into foreign countries in search of timber, as well as of skilled men for the temple:

So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. . . . And King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses.*

And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.†

So was he seven years in building it.‡

Four years collecting materials, and seven years building the temple—eleven years altogether. And “threescore and ten thousand men,” added to “fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain,” plus “three thousand and six hundred” overseers, make a hundred and fifty-three thousand men in the service of the temple. By adding to this number the thirty thousand traveling abroad for the same object, we get the grand total of one hundred and eighty-three thousand and six hundred laborers devoting eleven years to the erection of the temple.

When at last the monument which had taxed the whole nation and its God to the utmost was completed, people came from far and near to behold it and its royal architect:

And when the Queen of Sheba§ heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions.

* I Kings v, 10-14.

† II Chronicles ii, 2.

‡ I Kings vi, 38.

§ Country unknown.

. . . and Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not.

And when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. . . . And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones.*

There was no more spirit in her, I suppose, means she was dumb with astonishment. Indeed, the fame of the temple of Solomon threw a sort of magic spell upon all the rival nations of the world, hypnotizing them into submission to Israel:

And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.

And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.†

Everything turns into silver and gold. Every one of Jehovah's favorites, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, became exceeding rich. In the present instance, not only are "all the kings of the earth" on their knees before the man who conceived and carried into completion so stupendous a monument — one of the seven or eight wonders of the world — but they also empty their purses in his lap. The temple is already earning a dividend.

But when we draw nigh unto this bible masterpiece to take its measurements, we find that the one hundred and eighty-three thousand and six hundred men, working for eleven years, and spending the wealth of many

* II Chronicles ix, 1-9.

† II Chronicles ix, 23, 24.

modern countries put together, produced only what we would call to-day an unusually small meeting-house.

And the house which King Solomon built for the Lord, the length thereof was three-score cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits.

And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house.*

Now a cubit is the length of the forearm from the elbow to the end of the middle finger, or about eighteen inches. The Egyptian cubit was about twenty inches. It is not quite certain whether the Hebrew cubit was as long. Some commentators, wishing to help Solomon's temple, stretch the cubit to nearly twenty-six inches. Figuring, however, on the basis of the cubit of bible times, the Egyptian cubit, to ascertain the size of Solomon's temple, we find that this national monument of Israel, the pride of the desert, was about ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high; which would have cost to-day, when labor and material are very much higher, but a few thousand dollars, and a short time to build it in. Surely not all the gold and silver which David and his son Solomon raised by taxing the people, and by collecting tribute from foreign powers were spent in the erection of this modest little chapel! Into what other channels could the money have been diverted? Who did the stealing? Nobody, really. It was only mythical wealth, and a mythical army of workmen, building a mythical temple. The real temple which was destroyed when Jerusalem was sacked must have been a very inexpensive affair.

The only striking feature of the vaunted Solomonic

* I Kings vi, 2.

edifice was its porch, which was altogether out of proportion to the rest of the building, being one hundred and forty feet higher than the temple itself. But the eccentric porch, climbing up a hundred and forty feet higher than the building it was designed to serve, as well as the building itself, and the untold moneys it cost, together with the huge army of toilers, existed only in the imagination of the Jewish scribe. We have only to think of the pyramids of Egypt, the cities and temples of Babylonia, the still-abiding wonder of Baalbec — the temple of the sun, to realize that even when they vaunt their gifts and possessions, even with their passion for inflation and swagger, the bible writers do not rise to the level of the achievements of their heathen neighbors.

But it is only by comparing Athens with Jerusalem that we realize how very much more wonderful is the truth of paganism than Jewish fiction. It is not our intention to enumerate the masterpieces of Athens. To preserve even its dust and broken fragments, museums far more stupendous than Solomon's temple have been reared all over the world. Was not Athens — as a city, as a place of habitation, as a school for the mind, as a spectacle for the eye, as the home of liberty — better than Jerusalem? And is not the book or books which tell the story of the wonderful Greeks — how they lived, and thought, and sang, and wrought their masterpieces — better than the book which tells the story of the desert? Both Judaism and Christianity will disappear, but Greece, that is to say, science, that is to say, art, that is to say, civilization, will continue to produce masterpieces, and yet remain as prolific as time.

PART V.

Contradictions in the Bible

CONSISTENCY is as admirable in a book as it is in a man. Inconsistency is born either of ignorance or insincerity. In either case, it is a serious blemish in both man and book. There is, of course, a sense in which all growing minds are inconsistent, and proudly so. Manhood is inconsistent with childhood, experience contradicts want of knowledge, and progress is the very antithesis of custom and tradition. But there is no contradiction in dropping an idea which we find to be outworn and untenable, to espouse its very opposite. On the other hand, it would be the most unpardonable inconsistency to try to hold on to an opinion in the face of all the evidence against it. Equally insincere and contradictory would be our conduct if we advocated the new idea without giving up the old.

The Protestants, for instance, profess to believe in private judgment; but they also believe in an infallible revelation. How can an honest mind hold on to both these ideas? What is private judgment good for where there is an infallible guide? But, if private judgment is meant to help us test or interpret infallibility, then private judgment is the judge of infallibility, which is absurd. And when a man uses his private judgment and disagrees with any part of the bible, is he not summarily dropped from the list, and "delivered up to Satan," as the apostle commands? Is that the way to respect the right of private judgment?

The bible is replete with contradictions of this description. A thing is often said and unsaid in the

same sentence. An idea is affirmed and denied; a promise made and broken; a doctrine given and withdrawn, in about every chapter of the bible. The most contrary propositions may be proved by texts equally "inspired." Not only does one writer pull down what the other builds up, but the same writer repeatedly demolishes his own work. The author of Exodus, for instance, states as plainly as language will allow that God is invisible; but the same writer assures us that God has been seen by man, and his form and shape discerned. Moses reports the Lord as saying to him, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live."* But the same Moses testifies that "the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto a friend."† The Apostle John bluntly contradicts this "divine" statement, by another equally "divine," that "*No man* hath seen God at any time."‡ And whereas Jacob swears that he not only saw God but had also a wrestling match with him, which lasted for many hours,§ the Apostle Paul testifies that, not only has no man ever seen God, but no man *can* ever see him.**

It is also stated that Abraham dined with the Lord, and that about seventy of the elders went up the mount and saw the God of Israel.†† But more serious than the textual discrepancies, which are numerous, are the moral contradictions, of which the following is but one out of many.

In telling the story of the Tower of Babel, and, describing the state of society immediately after the

* Exodus xxxiii, 20.

† Exodus xxxiii, 11.

‡ John i, 18.

§ Genesis xxxii, 24-31.

** I Timothy vi, 16.

†† Exodus xxiv, 9-11.

deluge, the bible paints a pleasing picture of the world after all the bad people in it had been drowned :

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*

An ideal state! To educate the races of the world to dwell together as one great family, speaking the same language and cherishing the same hopes — is not that the object of all our efforts? But this was precisely what the God of the bible is represented as not desiring. When Jehovah looked down from heaven and saw the state of harmony in which these people dwelt, and the energy and unanimity with which they labored to erect a tower which in their simplicity they thought would protect future generations from such a deluge as had destroyed their fathers and mothers, he was very much alarmed, and, as the text says, he decided to break up this happy family, and to make strangers and wanderers of its members over the whole earth. Could anything be more inconsistent!

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one (*that*, he did not like), and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.†

This picture of human concord and purpose displeased the being, one of whose supposed titles is "Our Father in Heaven." Nor did he enjoy the sight of a united people, building a city, and a tower to defend themselves against the fury of nature; in other words,

* Genesis xi, 1.

† Genesis xi, 5, 6.

progress and science provoked the anger of Jehovah. And so the Lord said:

Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.*

What an occupation for a "good" God! Instead of blessing their union and brotherhood, he destroys them. And this is the being whose fatherhood is to be the basis of human brotherhood! Even as Adam was expelled from the garden, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever,"† the people dwelling in peace and laboring in unison must be scattered lest they become great and happy. And is this the book which is to teach us human brotherhood?

The brotherhood of man existed; but the bible-God destroyed it. "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one." Is not that brotherhood? They were not fighting one another; they were not persecuting one another; they were not idle; they were not working at cross-purposes. But after the Lord had sown the seeds of discord, this unity was no more. How different is the bible from what people think it is!

But it would be easier to make a list of the inconsistencies to be found in the Old Testament than to undertake to call attention even to a limited number of its most glaring inconsistencies. The Old Testament, being miraculous from beginning to end, is but a mass of mutually destructive statements, from the Mosaic commandment, which forbids a man "to trim the cor-

* Genesis xi, 7, 8.

† Genesis iii, 22.

ners of his beard," to the saying of the Lord that he himself will turn barber and shave the people:

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired . . . the head, and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.*

A sane word in the bible is as rare as an oasis in a desert. The Old Testament is mostly paradox and platitude.

Serious Discrepancies in the Story of Jesus

BUT what about the New Testament? The Jesus story is as miraculous as the Mosaic, and, therefore, equally well stocked with contradictions. In presenting to us the narrative of the birth of Jesus, the first evangelist, Saint Matthew, states that Joseph "took the young child (Jesus) and his mother by night and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod. . . . But when Herod was dead . . . he (Joseph) arose and took the young child and his mother and came . . . and dwelt in a city called Nazareth."† The Evangelist Luke, on the other hand, not only ignores the flight to Egypt, but leaves absolutely not a shadow of a foundation for the story as told in Matthew, which is, that as soon as the wise men from the East had departed, an angel of the Lord ordered the "Holy Family" to Egypt. This was to protect the infant Jesus from the machinations of King Herod. It is also clearly stated that they remained in Egypt until

* Isaiah vii, 20. *The hair of the feet.* The translators were too civilized to render this sentence into plain English, so they substituted the word "feet" in place of the objectionable word in the Hebrew.

† Matthew ii, 14-23.

“the death of Herod.” But according to Luke, Jesus did not leave the country at all, nor did he avoid Jerusalem, where Herod reigned :

And when the days of her purification, according to the laws of Moses, were accomplished (eight days after birth of the child) they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. . . . And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.*

When, then, did they visit Egypt?

According to the law of Moses, Mary, the mother of Jesus, having given birth to a child, could not appear in public until the days of her purification were over, and Jesus, the child, was required by another law, equally binding, to be circumcised on the eighth day, which he was, according to Luke’s Gospel:

And when the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.†

But if Mary and her son remained in the land to perform these ceremonies, and if they appeared in the temple at Jerusalem, where Herod could have easily seized him, if he was really looking for him, what becomes of the story in Saint Matthew, that Jesus fled by night from Bethlehem to a foreign country, where he remained in hiding until Herod died? Matthew says, Jesus fled to Egypt; Luke says, he did not go to Egypt at all, but was taken to Jerusalem, and publicly circumcised in the temple, after which he and his parents went to live in Nazareth.

If Jesus followed the course laid down by Matthew, he could not possibly have gone to Jerusalem, eight

* Luke ii, 22-39.

† Luke ii, 21.

days after his birth, and thence to Nazareth; if, on the other hand, he did as Luke reports, then it was a physical impossibility for him to have fled to Egypt. Is it not evident from these random and careless statements that the writers are not reporting actual events, but merely reproducing floating gossip?

Let us quote another instance: Mark says that "immediately" after his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and that he remained there for forty days. Note the words "immediately" and "for forty days," and then read what John says about what Jesus did after he was baptized. According to this evangelist, Jesus, three days after he was baptized, went to a wedding in Cana of Galilee, where he turned water into wine. Will the interpreters of the Scriptures please tell us how Jesus could have gone to the wilderness *immediately* after his baptism and remained there for *forty* days, if, according to another report, he went to a marriage feast three days after his baptism? A historical account in which such contradictions occur would lose, and deserves to lose, the confidence of the reader.

Perhaps few events are so essential to the Christian plan of salvation as the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. But there is not a consistent report of even this all-important occurrence in the Gospels. Mark has it that Jesus was crucified at the third hour; John thinks that Jesus was not crucified until some time after the sixth hour. Now, if Jesus were really crucified, and these reporters were in Jerusalem at the time, and were also present at the crucifixion, they would have known, even without inspiration, at what hour the awful tragedy took place. The very fact that they report the time of

the day shows that they are anxious to give to their report all the earmarks of a historical document. If, therefore, the event had really transpired, and if the apostles had been eye-witnesses of it, there would have been unanimity as to the hour in which Jesus was crucified. The lack of such unanimity shows, we believe, that the reporters were far removed from the supposed events they are describing, and that they had nothing more than rumors to guide them.

In the description of the scene on Calvary, there are nearly as many inaccuracies as there are sentences.

Matthew and Mark say: "The thieves, also, which were crucified with him . . . reviled him."

John says: "And one of the malefactors . . . railed on him. . . . But the other rebuked him (his companion) saying, Dost thou not fear God?" etc.

Matthew says: "They gave him (Jesus) *vinegar* to drink, mingled with *gall*."

Mark says: "And they gave him to drink, wine mingled with myrrh."

Nor do the biographers of Jesus agree as to whether Jesus drank the vinegar-wine, or not. Matthew says, he "tasted thereof, but would not drink." Mark says: "And they gave him to drink . . . but he received it not." John is sure this is a mistake, for he says: "He received the vinegar." Luke does not mention the wine-vinegar drink at all. We wonder what he would have said had he also referred to the matter.

But a better idea of the character of these documents will be had by comparing the different accounts of the last hours, and the last words of Jesus. If Luke may be credited, Jesus delivered quite a little speech on his way to Calvary. Seeing the "great com-

pany of people, and of women " which followed him, he said, addressing the women alone :

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

This is quite pessimistic, and contains no suggestion of the great hope and salvation which a dying Saviour is said to have brought to the world. And as none of the other evangelists reports this somber lamentation of Jesus, it is likely that some celibate alarmist, who expected the speedy destruction of the world, penned the lines. Is it conceivable that, if Jesus actually delivered the above speech on his way to the cross, and under the most impressive circumstances — that three of his intimate and inspired biographers would have omitted any mention of it? We are willing to waive the claim that an " infallible " document should be free from such errors as are liable to slip into human writings, but should they not, at least, be as free from them as any uninspired historical document is expected to be? It is reported that Pilate wrote a " superscription " in three languages to be placed on the cross, and which could be read even by the people in Jerusalem. What was this superscription? Each of the four evangelists gives a different reading of it.

Matthew: " This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Mark: " The King of the Jews."

Luke: " This is the King of the Jews."

John: " Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

* Luke xxiii, 29-31.

Notwithstanding that we have four supposedly inspired witnesses, the exact wording of the short superscription remains unknown.

We are equally in the dark as to the last words of Jesus: "I thirst," and "It is finished," were his last words according to John.

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," are the words reported by Luke.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," were the last words according to Matthew and Mark.

When we consider the miracle of the resurrection, it can not escape notice that the documents which tell of it are nothing but a collection of popular rumors which, as usual, contradict one another at every point. There is, on the one hand, for instance, the emphatic and unqualified statement, "So shall the son of man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth." Then follows an equally unqualified statement that Jesus was buried late Friday, and rose before or at sunrise, Sunday, thereby allowing only, at the utmost, *one day and two nights* for Jesus to remain in his grave. Again, if the four narrators of the events in Jesus' life were eye-witnesses of them, they would have surely agreed in the report of the place from which Jesus ascended. The writer of the Book of Acts tells us that Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olivet. The writer of the third Gospel says it was from Bethany that he went up to heaven. The author of the second Gospel intimates that it was from neither of these places that Jesus ascended, but that it was while they were all at dinner. Add to these conflicting reports, the important omission of John, the author of the fourth Gospel, who does not so much as even mention

this wonderful *finale* in the earthly life of the Christian god, and an idea may be formed of the character of the events narrated in our Gospels.

According to one version of the miraculous conversion of Paul, who may be called the real founder of Christianity — at least, the man who was responsible for its introduction into Europe — the men who were with him when he saw his famous vision on the road to Damascus “stood speechless, *hearing* a voice, but seeing no man.” This is as explicit as any statement can be. But according to another version the men who were with Paul “*saw* indeed the light . . . but they heard not the voice.”

PAUL'S CONVERSION.†

STORY No. 1.

And the men which journeyed with him (Paul) stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

PAUL'S CONVERSION.

STORY No. 2.

And they that were with me saw indeed the light . . . but they heard not the voice.

The only way to account for so decisive a disagreement in the narration of, presumably, one of the most significant events in the history of Christianity, is that the writer or writers had no first-hand knowledge of what they were reporting, and that both of the above versions were matters of popular gossip — some holding to the earlier and others to the later accounts, and the narrator, wishing to please both parties, and possessing no reliable data himself, incorporated them both in his report.

An equally impressive event in the rise of Christianity is the suicide of Judas, one of the twelve apostles. That Jesus should have selected Judas for an apostle, knowing he was a murderer in embryo, is puz-

* Read the ninth and the twenty-second chapters of *Acts*.

SAW THE
LIGHT
NOT
HEARD
VOICE

COULD
NOT
UNDERSTAND
THE
VOICE
OF THE
LORD

zling enough, but that there should be no unanimity as to the fate of a man who plays one of the principal rôles in the Christian scheme of salvation, lends serious support to the theory that Judas, too, is a myth. Observe the irreconcilable accounts concerning Judas, as given in Matthew and in the Acts of the Apostles:

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

Judas . . . brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.*

ACCORDING TO ACTS.

Now this man (Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity.†

Matthew's account makes Judas return the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders who had bribed him with the amount; the other makes Judas purchase a piece of land with the money.

There are also two contradictory accounts of the way in which Judas met his death.

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

And he (Judas) went and hanged himself.‡

Rope breaks + Judas

ACCORDING TO ACTS.

And (Judas) falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out.§

The writer of Acts knows nothing about the hanging story. His Judas has a headlong fall, which causes him to burst open in the midst, tearing out his bowels. A man hanging himself can not have a headlong fall, and if it had been known to the writer of Acts that Judas "went and hanged himself," he would have left out "he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out."

We leave it to the theologians to explain the manner of Judas' death.

* Matthew xxvii, 3.

† Acts i, 18.

‡ Matthew xxvii, 5.

§ Acts i, 18.

PRESTERS bought LAND

w/ Judas' MONEY - thus indirectly

Judas did buy LAND

One Writer Makes Jesus Affirm What Another Made Him Deny

WHEN we come to study the sayings attributed to Jesus the contradictions become more and more pronounced. The most irreconcilable statements are put in Jesus' mouth, often by the same evangelist, as the following few quotations will show :

JESUS IS THE JUDGE OF MEN.

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.—John v, 22.

JESUS IS NOT THE JUDGE OF MEN.

I (Jesus) judge no man.—John viii, 15.

If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not. For I came not to judge the world.—*Ibid.* xiii, 47.

JESUS WITNESS OF HIMSELF IS TRUE.

I am one that bear witness of myself . . . Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.—*Ibid.* viii, 1, 4, 18.

JESUS WITNESS OF HIMSELF IS NOT TRUE.

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.—*Ibid.* v, 31.

TEMPTATIONS ARE TO BE AVOIDED.

Lead us not into temptation.—The Lord's Prayer, Matthew vi, 13.

TEMPTATIONS ARE TO BE COURTED.

Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.—James i, 2.

In the same way it could be proven by the bible that Jesus worked miracles of every description to inspire faith in his mission, and from the same book it could just as positively be shown that Jesus not only worked no miracles whatever, but that he gave his

word of honor he would under no circumstances give a sign to prove his claims :

*THING He
would
Accepted
Here
on.*

JESUS REFUSES TO PERFORM
MIRACLES.

And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven. . . . And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith . . . *There shall no sign be given unto this generation.* And he left them. . . .*

JESUS RECITES HIS MANY
MIRACLES.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.†

It is difficult to suppose that the Pharisees, after seeing all these miracles performed in their midst daily, desired "a sign" from him, or that Jesus, instead of pointing to his many miracles, should declare, positively: "There shall no sign be given unto this generation." The miracle of Jonah, who was in the belly of a fish for three days, was enough, Jesus said to the Jews, to prove his own divinity.

Again, it is as clear as anything can be, for instance, that the words, "Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"‡ were interpolated into the text of the Gospels after the Trinitarian party had come into power. If Jesus really delivered the words to his disciples just before they began their missionary labors, how is it that not one of the baptisms by the Apostles recorded in the New Testament were in the name of the Trinity? Paul was not baptized according to the formula given in the Gospels; Peter did not baptize in the name of a triune God; Philip,

* Mark viii, 11-13.

† Matthew xi, 4, 5.

‡ Matthew xxiii, 19.

who baptized the Ethiopian, does not seem to have known of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost form of baptism.

Again, if Jesus really commanded his Apostles to go into all the world, and teach all nations, is it likely that only a short time thereafter, Peter, one of the pillars, who had seen the risen Lord, and was now confirmed in his faith, would have refused to preach the Gospel to Cornelius because the latter was not a Jew? And if Jesus really sent them unto all the nations of the world, how are we to explain the bitter controversy over the admission of Gentiles into the church—a controversy that led Paul to denounce Peter as a dissimulator? It is not a lack of moral courage, but courtesy, which, in view of these revelations, restrains us from calling the above text in the Gospels a partisan forgery. Is it reasonable to suppose that the same Jesus who forbade his disciples to go to the Gentiles, telling them to confine themselves exclusively to the Jews, also commissioned them to make no distinction of race, country or religion?

Below we present one of the most important commandments of Jesus, and the prompt cancellation of the same, in parallel columns:

Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*	Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.†
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Again, Jesus said:

I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.‡

* Matthew x, 5.

† Luke xvi, 15.

‡ Matthew xv, 24.

It is claimed that Jesus postponed the giving of the larger command until his disciples could appreciate it. But there is a serious objection to this explanation. When Jesus forbade his apostles to visit any of the cities of the Gentiles, he stated his reason for it. "I am not sent," he said, "but unto the . . . house of Israel." Could any pronouncement be more explicit than that? He further explained to his disciples that they would not finish visiting the cities of Israel before they would see him in his second coming. It was after Christianity had crossed over into Europe that a note of universality was introduced into it. That Jesus had no idea, or even desire, to include the non-Jewish peoples of the world into his heavenly kingdom, is clearly inferred from his definite declaration that the world would come to an end during the lifetime of some of those who heard his preaching.

And now, how do the orthodox defend themselves against these revelations? One of the answers they offer is that contradictions and inaccuracies occur in all books, but we do not discredit them on that account. Therefore, they conclude, it is not fair to discredit the bible because of the mistakes it contains. But the bible is claimed to be an infallible book; and for an infallible book to stand in need of the courtesy and indulgence shown to human writings is a terrible humiliation. Moreover, the kind of contradictions which exist in the bible would destroy the reputation of any book.

A second defense is that the mistakes in the bible are limited to details only, and that in the essentials, it is infallible. It will not be necessary to remind the readers of this book of the untruth of that statement.

But why could not an inspired book be as accurate in the details as in the essentials? If, for instance, the world were really created, or if Jesus were crucified and raised from the grave, why is there not a consistent account of these events?

A third defense is that these contradictions really prove the inspiration of the bible. Had there been one consistent account of the life and teachings of Jesus, instead of four contradictory ones, the apostles might have been suspected of collusion, but the inconsistencies in their narratives show, it is said, that they were honest men. Let us test the value of the above defense by applying it to a specific instance: Matthew and Luke testify that the women, upon their return from the empty grave of Jesus, communicated their experience to the disciples: "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre . . . and did run to bring his disciples word." Mark, on the other hand, testifies that the women fled from the sepulchre in consternation; "neither said they any thing to any man." Now, did the Holy Ghost, under whose inspiration both accounts were supposedly produced, purposely cover the facts, or misinform the reporters, that it may never be definitely known what the women really did when they returned from the grave; or, did he confuse the writers that the world may see in their disagreements the proof of their honesty? But such a manœuvre would only prove the ingenuity of the Holy Ghost — not the honesty of the reporters. If the women communicated with the disciples upon their return from the grave, then, to have reported as Mark does, that "neither said they any thing to any man," was an error. It may have been an honest error, but if he were

prompted by the Holy Ghost to make the error, it does not prove his honesty, any more than the contrary report proves the honesty of Matthew and Luke.

But there is a more important question suggested by this discussion: Why are there four Gospels? If it were for the purpose of supplementing what the others have omitted, we ask, why should there be omissions in an inspired document? If all four of the evangelists in reporting the same event agree perfectly, three of the reports would be superfluous. One inspired and truthful account of it would have been enough. If, however, the four accounts of the same event do not agree, as we have seen that in numerous instances they do not, then no one will attempt to maintain that all four of them could be true. If one evangelist testifies that the ascension took place from the Mount of Olives, and another is equally sure that it was from Bethany, about three miles from the former place, it is evident that only one of them can be correct, if Jesus ascended at all. The only good reason for more than one inspired account of Jesus' life is that given by a great pillar of the early church, namely, there had to be as many Gospels as there were corners to the earth, or winds of heaven.

PART VI.

I.

What Was The Bible Meant to Teach?

LET us now examine the claim that nothing has or can hurt the bible, and that this fact is the proof of its divinity. We will have no trouble in proving to the reader, that, in spite of the most expensive and extensive protection which the bible has enjoyed for centuries, criticism has compelled it to part, one after another, with all its claims. The science of the bible, for instance, has been thoroughly discredited. Its story of creation and of the origin of man has been everywhere replaced by the truer revelation of science. Darwin has placed Genesis on the shelf. The fire of criticism has irrevocably destroyed the Mosaic narrative. "Inspiration" has gone down before investigation. There is not a single institution of learning which accepts any longer the bible for a guide in matters of science. Even in Catholic schools, the world revolves around the sun, and the heresy of Galileo is to-day the faith of both pope and cardinals. Yes, the world goes around, and even the Catholic church does not wish to prevent it, but goes around with it. Is not the word of man, then, as far as it relates to science, more reliable than the Word of God? In science, at least, the bible has been replaced by the better books of modern thinkers.

The bibliolater, however, tries to turn the edge of

this strong point against his fetish by answering that the bible was not meant to teach science. Very well, if science is not the province of the bible, then, it leaves out one of the most important branches of knowledge, and to that extent it is inferior to the books that include science. But really, to say that the bible does not teach science, is to admit that it is unscientific, or false in its science. It may not have been the intention of Moses to deny the doctrine of evolution, but when he says the universe was made in six days, and apparently, out of nothing, he talks unscientifically, and, therefore, ignorantly and falsely. Joshua may not have intended to combat the law of gravitation, but when he stops both sun and moon for his private business, he makes himself a rival of Sir Isaac Newton by teaching a contrary science, that is to say, a false science. It is impossible for the bible to speak about the origin of man — the animals, vegetation and the formation of sun and star — without entering the field of science. When, therefore, its clerical defenders say that the bible was not meant to teach science, they really mean it is *something* else in the bible that is inspired, and not its science.

It is then admitted that the science of the bible is not “inspired,” and that the science of man is better than that of the bible; let us now see if the *history* of the bible is “inspired.” If we desire the truth about the nations of antiquity — Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome — do we go to the bible for information? Are not the stones dug out of the ground, and the uncovering of buried cities, the reading of the inscriptions upon monument and pyramid, a more reliable source of knowledge than Hebrew gossip? Is

it the bible or the hieroglyphics which have resisted the wear and tear of time that introduce us to the laws, institutions, the manners and morals of remote nations? Did Herodotus get his facts from the bible? Did Rawlinson discover his wonderful story of ancient empires in the bible? Did Gibbon copy his monumental history of the Roman world from the bible? There is to-day in the Louvre, in France, a stone, called the Hammurabi stone, which gives a truer glimpse into the public and private life of ancient Chaldea than all the five books of Moses. It is discoveries like the Hammurabi stone which enable us to understand also the bible and the sources it borrowed from. In the British museum are the sculptures, the slabs, the bas-reliefs, the mummies, the tombs, the thrones, and the gods of the world of long ago; and it is from them, and not from the anonymous and undated copies of lost documents which compose the bible that we receive accurate information concerning the races of the past. But, perhaps, the bible was not meant to teach history, any more than it was meant to teach science. The history of the bible is as unreliable as its science. What information it gives us about the Egyptians is not true; what it says about the ancient Assyrian empire is not true; even what it says of the "chosen people" is not true. The excavations and investigations of man have shown that the bible writers invented, in the majority of instances, the vices they attributed to their neighbors and the virtues which they claimed for themselves. Both their own greatness and the insignificance of their rivals existed only in their own imagination.

But if the bible were not meant to teach either science or history, what does it teach? It will not be

denied that before the days of modern thought the bible taught everything — science and history as well. It is criticism that has compelled the bible to retire from those fields. But to say, as the clergy do, that the bible is not an authority on science or history, is to make a fearful admission. Either the “inspired” authors knew the truth about the universe and the ancient empires, or they did not. If they knew the truth, why did they tell an untruth; if they were ignorant, why did they not admit their ignorance? The books which teach both science and history represent, in that respect, at least, a greater and richer collection of books than the Jewish-Christian scriptures.

But is *philosophy* the specialty of the bible? The wisest man in the bible, who is also the wisest man God is said to have created, is Solomon. There are many excellent maxims in the writings attributed to this Jewish author. But writing maxims does not make a man a philosopher. To be a philosopher, one must not only have some kind of an answer to the many questions which come up in the life of the world, but he must also work these answers, acquired after years of study and research, into what might be called a system, comprehensive in its sweep and harmonious in the relation of its parts to the whole. Is there an author or a teacher in the bible who may be called a philosopher, or who has a philosophy, in this sense of the word? Compare Solomon with Aristotle, whom Goethe called “The intellect of the world!” What are Solomon’s handful of proverbs compared with Aristotle’s monumental work, touching upon every phase of human life — art, science, history, politics, ethics, music, the drama, education, government, inter-

national law, medicine, finance, economics, religion! How diminutive appears "the wisest man" of the bible beside this colossus, whom Dante named "The master of those who know!" And while Aristotle was not "inspired," there is not in all his writings one idea that is degrading or immoral, while much of Solomon's writings would be denied the privilege of the mails were they not labeled "holy."

The *Songs of Solomon*, which abound in passages we can not quote in this place, are defended by the clergy on the theory that they were meant to describe the love of Christ for his church. But Solomon had never heard of Christ. And, then, why should Christ use the language of a debauchee to express his affection for the church? How desperate must be the case of the bible champions to resort to so foolish an explanation!

In the book of *Ecclesiastes*, another of Solomon's philosophical treatises, there are expressed ideas which are positively hurtful. The whole tenor of his teaching is that everything is a vanity. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," he cries. Like a satiated oriental sultan, he has lost the ability to take pleasure in life. Like Macbeth, he wishes "the estate of the world were now undone." Life to him is but a "strut" across the stage. There is no difference, he says, between a man and a beast; between a fool and a wise man, between a good man and a bad man, for what happens to the one happens to the other. And the conclusion he arrives at is this:

A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry.*

* Ecclesiastes viii, 15.

Few people, and even few preachers, who quote the words "Let us eat and drink and make merry, for to-morrow we may die," know, or are willing to admit, that the words did not originate with some French infidel, but with the wisest man God ever created.

Speaking of women, Solomon is "inspired" to make the following comment:

Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.*

No other man but an "inspired" Jew would be forgiven for such an insult to woman. Solomon plainly states that while both men and women are bad, yet women are much worse, for he has found one good man among a thousand, but not one good woman "among all those." Could any book be more *unholy* than the one which contains so sweeping and spiteful an accusation? And yet this is the book the reading of which our preachers are trying to make compulsory in the home and school. But the saddest and strangest of all is the conduct of the women, who notwithstanding this insult, fall upon their knees before this Asiatic volume and kiss the text that filches from them their good name!

Of course, there are bad women, as there are bad men. But if the ability to restrain one's passions be a virtue, if resistance to temptation is indicative of strength of character, women are much stronger than men. There are few men who would not make fools of themselves if women encouraged them. If patience, endurance of pain, and self-sacrifice are desirable traits of character, women are braver than men. Every time

* Ecclesiastes vii, 28.

a woman becomes a mother, she descends, so to speak, into the grave to give life to another. There is not a man who was not at one time carried in a woman's arms. But for her love, tenderness and unselfishness, there would have been no civilization.* If woman counts for anything to-day; if intellectually, socially, industrially and politically, she has stepped to the front, it is all due to her own efforts — efforts against ancient and "inspired" prejudices, against the opposition of bibles and the creeds, of priests and politicians, and of Church and State. Unaided by man or God, woman has saved herself from a life of slavery and inaninity, of injustice and drudgery, and to-day both Church and State fear the rising power of woman!

But perhaps the bible is great for its *literary* qualities. Much is said in praise of the bible in this respect. We are asked to admire it as a collection of literary masterpieces. But which are the masterpieces in the bible? Is it the book of Ruth? Is it Esther? Is it Jonah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel? Is it Leviticus, or Isaiah? Is it the Psalms of David, or the Songs of Solomon? The only book that comes near being a masterpiece is the book of Job, which, with the exception of the first and second chapters, in which Satan makes a fatal wager with Jehovah for the soul of Job, is the work of a sceptic. Is there any story or romance in the bible that can compare in beauty and might to the *Faust* of Goethe, or the *Omar Khayyam* of Fitzgerald, or to the *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley? Is there a book among the five attributed to Moses, or

* Consult the author's *Woman Suffrage; or, the Child-bearing Woman and Civilization*.

the dozen or more attributed to the prophets, that is as entrancing as Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*?

Is Joshua's story of brigandage to be likened to Schiller's drama of the *Robbers*? And where is the tale in the bible that permeates the thought with an indescribable sweetness as the *David Copperfield* of Dickens, or the *Adam Bede* of George Eliot? What is there in the two books of Kings, and the two books of Samuel, and the two books of Chronicles that can be mentioned in the same breath with the glories that enrich the pages of a Walt Whitman or an Emerson? Is there any wit or humor in the bible as refreshing, as innocent, as contagious, and as illuminating as that which made Mark Twain the darling of two hemispheres? Is there such music in the bible as throbs and swells in the lyric of Heine, in the thunder tones of Milton, or in the wild wonder of Byron's song? And in richness of style, in fluency and charm of language, in the sublimity and pathos of poise and period, in purity of diction, in felicity of expression, in soundness of conception and reasoning, is there any part of the Hebrew bible that can approach the incomparable authors of Athens and Rome, whose thought is the perpetual fragrance of the centuries? And I have not yet even mentioned the thousand-souled, the myriad-minded Shakespeare, whose monument is in the wonder and astonishment of the world, and whose cemetery is the heart of humanity, where he lies in such pomp and splendor that for such a tomb the gods even would wish to die!

And as for *eloquence*. I do not have to belittle the bible prophets in order to score a point in favor of the men and the voices which have thrilled the ages. I

have read chapter after chapter from the preachments of Isaiah and Jeremiah without deriving any more meaning out of them than I do from the verbose pages of prophet Dowie or Eddy. All theosophist writers speak in cryptic phrases. It is the thought that is like a clear and transparent stream, flowing as a sparkling gem, and not the thick and muddy source, that inspires true eloquence.

If the bible prophets were to reappear in our midst, doing and saying the things they are charged with in the Word of God, I am sure they would be placed under bonds to keep the peace. Let us see what it meant to *prophesy* in bible times. In the first book of Samuel, the nineteenth chapter, we read that Saul sent a regiment to capture David. It so happened that his messengers, while en route, became prophets, every one of them. He sent a second regiment with the same result. A third set of messengers become also prophetic and began to prophesy. We will let the bible explain what these men did when they became prophets, by quoting the lines which describe the conduct of Saul, who, going in search of his regiments, became himself a prophet:

And he (Saul) went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore, they say, is Saul also among the prophets?

Mark the word "also," which means that all his messengers had likewise stripped themselves when "the Spirit of the Lord was upon them." David did the same thing when he danced naked before the ark.

To the chief of the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, came this instruction from heaven :

At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.*

And he walked the streets, if the bible is to be depended, for three years "naked and barefoot . . . for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia," whatever that may mean. Another prophet, Micah, declares he will not only go about "stripped and naked," but he will also "howl."† And are these the men to be compared with the masters of eloquence in ancient and modern history?

Is it necessary, after all this, to call attention to the better and purer eloquence of Demosthenes, thundering against the menace of Macedonia to the liberties of Athens; of Cicero, defending, both with his voice and sword, the culture of Europe against the barbarians of the north; of Plato's *Apologia* of Socrates, the finest argument for freedom of thought and speech that has come down to us from the past; of Pericles' eulogy of Athens, city of the light; of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, or the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, unexcelled in literature, as the Grecian Pantheon is in architecture!

And have we not forty centuries of forensic eloquence to pit against the explosions and fulminations of the diviners and soothsayers of the bible? There is Mirabeau, Danton, Cavour, Castellar, Garibaldi, Mazzini, Burke, Charles Sumner, Carl Schurz, Abraham

* Isaiah xx, 2.

† Micah i, 8.

Lincoln, and a glorious host of others, whose voices trembled with the woes of Ireland, or the victories of England, or the hopes of United Germany, or the cries of mangled France! Besides, the orators of Europe saved their countries by the new hope and energy they instilled into them; the prophets of the bible drove the nation they represented into ignominious bondage, and left desolation and ruin where there was once a people and a nation. Even the debris which Rome and Greece have left behind them is the envy of all the world to-day, while not even the Jews are willing to go back to their own Jerusalem.

II.

The Bible and Religion

BUT if the bible were not meant to teach science or history; if it were not meant to be a literary masterpiece, or a text-book of philosophy and eloquence, was it meant to teach religion? The claim is persistently made that it is essentially as a book of religion that the bible is to be judged, and that, as such, it is unsurpassed by any work of man. It is true that religion is the principal theme of the bible, but has it made any original contributions to it? Does the bible throw any more light on what are called the mysteries of religion than any other book? Before the bible, men speculated about the hereafter; has the bible changed speculation into knowledge? Before the bible, men believed or doubted the gods; has the bible changed faith, or doubt, into certainty? Which

unsolved problem concerning the origin of the universe, or of man, has the bible illuminated? The bible has added to the number of sects and creeds, but has it removed even one theological tenet from the field of controversy and uncertainty? A book concerning the most important deliverances of which Christians themselves do not, and will not agree, can not very well be a *revelation*.

Nor has the bible added a single new doctrine to the religious creeds that were already current in the world. Was it the doctrine of immortality, or of the incarnation, the immaculate conception, the trinity, the devil, original sin, or atonement by blood which the bible discovered. All these beliefs, together with baptism, circumcision, communion, etc., existed among the peoples of the world long before the advent of the Jews. Alexander von Humboldt says that when the different religions of the world are placed side by side it is difficult to tell them apart. Like mosses or grass, they spring up the same in every soil, and only by a very powerful microscope could be detected the slight variations, due to climate, time and environment.

I know the final plea for the bible is that it announced for the first time the one God idea. But we had occasion to ask in former comments on this subject, what was the value of such a contribution? Why is one God better than three or three hundred? Would the world have been better off with only one man in it, or the heavens with only one God, and no angels, cherubim, seraphim, Christs, or any other celestial being? But it is not *true*, as the following texts clearly prove, that the bible teaches the one-God theory. It is impossible not to infer from the way

the Jewish writers speak of Jehovah that they believed in the existence of other gods besides their own :

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? — Exodus xv, 11.

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.— Exodus xviii, 11.

Our Lord is above all gods.— Psalms cxxxv, 5.

Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.— Psalms cxxxviii, 1.

Great is our God above all gods.— II Chronicles ii, 5.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.— Exodus xx, 3.

Worship him, all ye gods.— Psalms xcvi, 7.

The same idea is conveyed by the declaration of David that among the gods there is none like unto his God, and by the further fact that Moses, when he met God in the bush, asked for his name, to distinguish him from other gods. There is no necessity for nomenclature in heaven if there is only one God. We do not need a name for God, unless more than one God exists in the universe. To name God, then, is a clear proof that it is done to distinguish him from others in the same calling. Why should God have a name? When Moses asked for the name of God, the latter should have replied: A name! for me! I, who am the Infinite, the Eternal! Names are to distinguish one from another. I have no equal, or rival. Has the Universe a name? Has Time a name? Has Truth a name? The mere fact of God having a name shows he is but one of the many idols, labeled and classified, that he may not be confused with others of the same profession.

A further proof of the plurality of gods in the bible is furnished by one of the texts which has been deliberately tampered with. The distinguished scholar,

Dr. Christie David Ginsburg, in his "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible," gives a long list of biblical passages which the *Sopherim*, or the rabbis, have purposely changed. One of the altered texts is in second Samuel, xxi: "Every man to his gods, O Israel." By transposing the two middle letters of the Hebrew word for gods, the translators converted the "gods," into "tents," and so the text now reads, "Every man to his tents, O Israel."

In the next chapter will be discussed the claim that the superiority of the bible lies in the perfect morality which it teaches.

III.

Does the Bible Teach Morality?

THE question which opens this chapter will surprise many of my readers. It has so often and so confidently been claimed that the bible is the text-book of morality, that hardly any one has thought of even investigating the claim. Just as the people have believed the bible to be inspired because *they say so*, they have come to believe, for the same reason, that the bible is *the* book of morals. The truth is, however, as I will endeavor to show, that the bible no more teaches morality than it does science, history or philosophy. That was not the purpose for which it was written, and that is an end toward which it makes practically no contribution at all.

Morality may be defined as the assertion of our rights and the defense of the rights of others. There is not a single phase of the question which is not cov-

ered by this definition. Even if morality were defined as the sum of our duties, personal and social, even then we must conquer the right to perform these duties, else we can not live a moral life. To obey our consciences we must have freedom, and freedom is a right; to sacrifice ourselves for a cause, or to keep ourselves "unspotted of the world," we must be allowed the right to develop along the line of our best ideals. Therefore, to be moral is to have the strength and the independence to be ourselves, and to defend others in the exercise of the same right. It is in the very nature of a revelation to deny man the right to be himself. But that is the very negation of morality. "You must obey," says the bible; "never mind whether you understand the commandments, or whether you approve of them or not." Is that morality? And the bible can not treat you as its equal, else what will become of its infallibility? In other words, the bible wants slaves who will do its bidding without protest or question. Under slavery there can be no self-development; that is to say, slaves can not be moral. It will be seen that by morality we mean very much more than the observance of a few "thou shalt nots."

But, again, a revelation, by forbidding us to improve upon its teachings, denies to us the greatest of all rights — that of growing better than our teachers. To believe in infallibility is to deny one's self the right to learn, and people who can not learn, or who can not correct their mistakes, can not be moral. But to say that the bible does not object to our changing its commandments, dropping some and adding others, is to admit that the bible is not divine. But if we may

not add, nor take away, nor improve upon the bible commandments, then we are automatons, and not men, and for automatons there is no morality. The gods will not permit anybody to be better than themselves. Such a thought is blasphemy to them. The progress that leaves the gods behind is denounced by all the churches. But what is this but denying a man the right to be himself, even if by being himself he should eclipse the gods. "Do as I tell you," or "Be as I am," is the bible commandment. The commandment of morality is "Be yourself."

But what about the many texts in the bible which demand purity, charity, love of one's neighbor, and, above all, righteousness? It is difficult to believe that the bible writers could have meant by the word righteousness what we mean by it, namely, ethical rectitude. How could such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Moses be held up as saints, and, at the same time, the most immoral deeds be attributed to them, without one word of disapproval? These men were "holy," not because they were pure, kind, just, honorable, or righteous, but because they were *orthodox*. Listen to this text: "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* Abraham was "righteous," not because his conduct was right, but because he had the right faith.

To the god of the bible himself, the difference between good and evil, or right and wrong, was altogether secondary, else how could he have said, "I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live."†

* Genesis xv, 6.

† Ezekiel xx, 25.

It no more troubles the conscience of Jehovah to play a trick upon his people than it did that of Abraham when he trafficked in his wife's honor. Nor did it in the least surprise the prophets when they caught their god lying to them. "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" asks Jeremiah; and again he says, "Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people."* But is he then going to look for another and a more honest god? Not at all. He does not regard lying as an insurmountable defect in the character of his god. And this because there is no ethical code in the bible; the bible is jealous of one thing — the right belief.

Jeremiah is not the only prophet who is willing to overlook in his deity so slight a defect as immorality: "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" is the exulting cry of Amos.†

Isaiah makes the God of Israel say: "I make peace and create evil. . . . I, the Lord, do all these things."‡ Nor did it in the least disconcert another prophet to admit that "the Lord hath put a *lying* spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets."§

Like people, like God. It is not religion that shapes and molds a people, but the people who make their religion. This explains such passages as the following, which the Jews attributed to their God:

And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived the prophet.**

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you.‡‡

In one of his letters, St. Paul does not hesitate to

* Jeremiah xv, 18; iv, 10.

† Amos iii, 6.

‡ Isaiah xlv, 7.

§ I Kings xxii, 23.

** Ezekiel xiv, 9.

‡‡ Jeremiah xviii, 11.

write that God purposely causes people to believe in a lie that he may have an excuse to damn them for not believing the truth. That people could read such a passage without protest and abhorrence, shows how effective has been the blight of this Asiatic cult upon the mind and heart of the western world. "And for this cause," writes the Apostle Paul, "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned."*

The God who in the Old Testament hardened the heart of Pharaoh that he might ruin him and his people, leads people, in the New Testament, to hug a delusion to their souls that he might damn them. And this is the being who is not only to be our pattern for morality, but it shall also be considered impossible for any one to be better than he is. To try to improve on this "divine" pattern is blasphemy, both to the Jew and the Christian.

To teach that no one can be better than Jehovah, as he is depicted in the bible, is the most hopeless pessimism. Morality is born of hope and courage. It is the idea of human perfectibility and the idea of progress which give wings to human effort. The bible denies to man the privilege to transcend the ideals of the past, or to be better than his Asiatic gods.

* II Thessalonians ii, 11, 12.

IV.

Righteousness in the Bible

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

THIS, and similar passages, are often quoted to give the bible a reputation. Many commentators, Mathew Arnold among them, contend that righteousness is the major key-note of the Old Testament. To prove this, the above passage from the prophet Micah is often quoted. Another text which these commentators are fond of quoting reads as follows:

And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.†

To deserve this salvation by a life of righteousness, it is claimed, was the one all-permeating thought of the "people of the bible." But this last passage from the Psalms occurs only once in the Old Testament, and it is a little strange that there should be just one reference to the thought which is said to permeate the whole bible. However, that is not the real answer to the conclusions drawn from this passage. By consulting the margin of the *Revised Version* of the bible, which, too, is the work of Christian scholars and has this advantage over the *Authorized Version*, that it is more accurate — by consulting, then, the latest and more accurate translation of the bible, we find that the text reads:

Whosoever offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me, and prepareth a way that I may show him the salvation of God.

* Micah vi, 8.

† Psalms l, 23.

There is nothing here about "righteousness," or ethical conduct, or conversation. It was the English translators who gave the text its moral tone.

Let us now examine the text which opens this chapter. It declares that God requires of his people justice, mercy and humility. The word which has been translated into English as "mercy" is *hesed*. It is difficult to believe that this word meant in Hebrew what we understand by "mercy." In the one hundredth and thirty-sixth Psalm, David, whose character we explain in this book, thus praises the *hesed*, or "mercy" of God:

To him that smote Egypt in their first-born; for his mercy (*hesed*) endureth forever.*

Surely no modern moralist would think of attributing the wholesale murder of all the first-born in a land to the "mercy" of God! In the same vein, David, while praising Jehovah's "mercy" for "overthrowing Pharaoh and his host, in the Red sea," for "slaying great kings," and "famous kings," whom God killed in battle and whose lands he gave to the Jews, he exclaims, "For his *hesed* (mercy) endureth forever." We associate with the idea of "mercy," tenderness, compassion and charity. What makes "mercy" or charity a great quality is that it is, as a rule, bestowed upon the unfortunate, and even the undeserving. But to describe killing people in their sleep, or throwing down stones from heaven to destroy soldiers defending their homes,† or to drown a nation trying to recover their property from the Jews who had "spoiled the Egyptians," before fleeing the land, as acts of "mercy,"

* Psalms cxxxvi, 10.

† Joshua x, 11.

is to make of morality a mockery. What is the difference between the red Indian extolling *Manitou* for the scalps he has given him, and David singing:

To him that smote Egypt in their first-born:
For his *mercy* endureth forever.*

Who would for a moment hesitate between these lines of David and

The quality of *mercy* is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath:

of Shakespeare?

It is not our purpose to show that the Old Testament knows nothing of "mercy" in the modern sense of the word, but that the word *hesed* in the bible text, which figures in the English translation of this text as "mercy," means something quite different. Following the lead of the great Hebrew scholar, Gesenius, Chilperic makes the word *hesed* in this text from Micah, synonymous with our word "piety." What Jehovah desires of his people, then, is not clemency, but piety; not the love of man, but the love of God. It is the duty of man to God, not the duty of man to his fellows, the world over, that the Jewish prophet has in mind. The first-born of Egypt and all the other foes of Israel were destroyed as a reward for the piety of the chosen people. It is for this David praises the *hesed* of the Lord. In the same way, the "do justly" in the text has also a purely ceremonial meaning. The word "justly" in the translation is not the English of the Hebrew word in the text, which is *mishpat*. The

* Consult Chilperic's article in *The Reformer*, Vol. VI, page 664.

Jews used the word in the sense of the law, or the judgments and ordinances, of Jehovah. What the Lord requires, then, in this text from Micah, which the commentators make so much of, is "to perform the law, to love piety, and to submit to Jehovah." And when the prophet quotes the Semitic God as saying: "I desired *hesed* (mercy), and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,"* he means just what the modern revivalist means when he says: "All your morality can not save you. What God insists upon is *piety*." If further evidence be required to know that what we understand by justice, love, charity, had no place in the vocabulary of the bible writers, there is the story narrated in I Samuel, xv. This "moral" teacher, Samuel, orders King Saul, in the name of Jehovah, to slaughter the Amalekites, "both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The king, in carrying out this program, manages to spare the lives of the best of the cattle; he also allows the Amalekite king to escape alive. Whereupon, Jehovah is so provoked that, "it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king," he says. Then Samuel goes to see the king, who relates to him how he had consumed the Amalekites by putting everything to the sword. "And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" The king replied that the best of the sheep and of the oxen were reserved "*to sacrifice unto the Lord.*" Observe now the answer which the prophet of God gave to the king:

* Hosea vi, 6.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Now we understand what it is that the Lord demands; so did Saul, after Samuel had explained it to him, for "Samuel hewed Agag (the king whose life had been spared) in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." From a human point of view, it would have been more moral to sacrifice to God the cattle Saul had saved than to "hew in pieces" a human being, but that is the morality of man; to be moral in the bible sense is to do as God commands, whether what he commands you to kill be a sheep or a human being. Morality, according to the bible, means unquestioning obedience. Addressing a monster revival meeting, the Christian preacher declared that: "Violation of the sixth commandment, cursing, theft, drunkenness, and even murder, are pardonable sins, but refusal to accept the Son of God is an eternal barrier to the heavenly kingdom."*

That is our definition of immorality.

V.

The Ten Commandments

IT is the claim of both Jews and Christians that the Ten Commandments form the foundation, not only for the moral and civil laws of our country, but of the civilized world as well. Some bibliolaters, in their zeal, go so far as to say that there was no morality in the world before the Ten Commandments were

* The Toledo News-Bee, May 17, 1911.

announced. That is to say, in their opinion, morality is but a few thousand years old. Why, the world itself, according to the bible chronology, is nearly six thousand years old. Are we to understand, then, that until the time of Moses the world managed to get along without any morality at all?

But we know that the world is very much older than six thousand years, and that there were great empires and a civilization which was already old, long long before the Jews arrived. Egypt was at the zenith of her culture when the sons of Jacob appeared within her gates to beg for bread, and Babylonia and Persia were world-empires when the Jews were still slaves. But to admit that there was any morality before Moses, is to give up the bible. What need could there be of a moral law coming down from heaven, if there were one already growing out of the earth? No deity is needed to find for us what was never lost, or to give us what we already possessed. To admit, therefore, that there were ancient nations who flourished and waxed strong in art and commerce, in culture and character, long before the Ten Commandments descended from the clouds, would be fatal to the claim that there can be no morality without the bible.

The defenders of the bible find themselves in a very embarrassing position. They can not deny Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome; but if they admit the greatness and glory of these empires, what becomes of their claim that morality was first given to the world by Moses in the wilderness? There is only one way out of the dilemma: Refuse to discuss the question. And that is practically the tactics of the bible champions at present. It is absolutely impossible to find

any more an educated and respectable churchman who is willing to debate the question before an audience of inquirers. Silence is their one remaining asset.

It is related in the bible that the Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone by the deity himself. But in a fit of anger, Moses, in whose custody the documents in stone were placed, "cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount."* This was a device to account for the non-existence of the tables. If ever there were a time when a miracle would have been in order, it was when Moses dropped the commandments. After forty days of labor, Jehovah delivers the moral law, and not wishing to entrust the work of taking down his dictation to Moses, he inscribes them on imperishable stone, with his own hand. And then they fall and break, like any schoolboy's slate. The slates should not have broken — and they would not have broken — if all the other miracles told in the bible are true. To have miracles without number when we do not need them, and then to refuse the one miracle that could have saved the handwriting of God, is a fatal argument against the miraculous.

It is true that Moses was summoned to the mountain for a new set of tables and commandments, but as I shall proceed to explain, the second Ten Commandments were not written by the deity. His handwriting was irretrievably lost by the breaking of the first tables. We have miracles to preserve shoes and garments, and dead men's bones, but none to save the writing of God. Thus it is that all the "original"

* Exodus xxxii, 19.

documents of the prophets and the apostles have perished, while the real wood of the cross and the coat of Jesus have been miraculously preserved.

In Exodus, thirty-second chapter, verse sixteen, we read:

And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

But what was the use? The tables broke, and the writing is lost. Why go to all that trouble to produce original documents, only to lose them so shortly after they are finished? The thirty-fourth chapter and the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses of the book of Exodus inform us that the second collection of Commandments which were given to replace the broken tables of stone, were not written by Jehovah, but by Moses:

And the Lord said unto Moses, write thou these words And he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days *and forty nights* And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*

But not only were the new commandments not in God's handwriting, but they were also totally different from the first Ten Commandments. Thus it was not only the divine writing that perished, but also the moral law as first given. It is true that Moses reports what the lost commandments were, but if he could remember them, why was it necessary for him to go up the Mount for a transcript of them? The unpleasant conclusion is forced upon our minds that not only had Moses forgotten what the broken tables of stone contained, but Jehovah, himself, could not remember them. Where, then, did Moses get the Ten Com-

* Exodus xxxiv, 27, 28.

mandments which he says were on the broken slates? I do not know. If he reported them from memory, and his memory were reliable, why was a second set of slates ordered, that the Lord might write on them "the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest"?* If a second series of commandments were given, as the text plainly states, because the first series was lost, how did Moses reproduce the lost commandments? Could he have put the fragments of the broken tables together, restoring thereby the handwriting of God? Really, it is not history that the bible gives us, but gossip.

It has already been shown that the deity did not write the second version of the moral law with his own hand, although he promised he would. Let me now present the second version of the Ten Commandments, to show that Jehovah had forgotten just as completely as had Moses, the first Ten Commandments which he himself had inscribed on the slates.

EXODUS XXXIV.

1. Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a Jealous God.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.
4. Every firstling that is male is mine. And the first fruits of the land thou shalt bring unto the Lord.
5. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks.
7. Thrice in the year shall all your men children (women not wanted) appear before the Lord God.
8. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven.
9. The sacrifice of the passover shall not be left over till the morning.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

* Exodus xxxiv, 1, *abbreviated.*

That these were the commandments given to take the place of those unfortunately lost appears by the text that follows, and which we ask permission to quote again :

And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words : . . . And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*

By comparing these two pronouncements, only a very slight resemblance can be discovered between them. In both documents, God is jealous, and the feast of Sabbaths and weeks is ordered to be scrupulously observed. There is not a single commandment in the second deliverance which can be described as ethical in its import. It is a "moral law" without the remotest suggestion of morality in it. Nothing is said about the duty of man to himself, his neighbor, or his posterity. The Ten Commandments which were broken and lost contained, at least, prohibitory clauses against murder, theft, adultery, and the bearing of false witness against one's neighbor. Even though these interdictions had in view the protection of the Jew only, as the conduct of Israel toward other peoples plainly shows ; and even though only a portion of the lost decalogue concerned itself with morality at all, the others being of a theological and ceremonial character, still they, at least, have the *appearance* of being a moral law, while the second decalogue is not even that.

And why are there *ten* commandments? The Protestants split the first commandment which forbids the worship of other gods and the making of graven images into two separate commandments ; the Catho-

* Exodus xxxiv, 27.

lics, on the other hand, divide the last commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," or wife, or ox, or ass, into two, by separating the wife from the ass and the ox. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," is a commandment by itself in the Catholic bible, while, as explained, the Protestant bible makes no distinction between a man's ox, ass and wife. Of course, we prefer the Catholic manipulation of the bible, in this respect, to that of the Protestants, who are more jealous of the favor of Jehovah than of that of woman. But by what authority do these sects go about splitting the divine commandments? Only recently Cardinal Gibbons expressed great horror at the suggestion of certain Protestants that the Ten Commandments should be abbreviated and modernized. "What blasphemy," exclaimed the cardinal. Yet, his church was guilty of that very kind of "blasphemy" when it separated what God had joined together—the ass, the ox and the wife.

VI.

The Commandments Broken

THE most telling criticism against the bible as an ethical work is that, while every one of its moral commandments are deliberately countermanded and cancelled and allowed to be, yes, ordered to be, broken, not one of the ceremonial or theological commandments was for a single time even suspended, or its neglect winked at, by the all-seeing Jehovah. The man who gathered kindling wood on the seventh day, or called on other gods, or ate his *totem*, or forgot his

taboo, or omitted the Abrahamic rite, or ate fat, or forgot his blood offerings, or married a Gentile, or ate leavened bread on certain days, or approached too near to a priest or the candlesticks, was never allowed to escape punishment; while the thief, the murderer, the debauchee, the falsifier, the traitor, the assassin, was again and again applauded and rewarded with special favors. The commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," was barely spelled out in full when the Lord orders a saturnalia of murder.

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor . . . even every man upon his son.*

Who can have patience with such a book? What has become of the intellect of Europe that it can go to such a book for its morality? In one of Napoleon's unpublished letters, addressed to Junot, after giving secret instructions about the movement against Lisbon, he adds, "Shoot, say, sixty persons."† If that makes him a monster, what shall we say of a being who asks fathers to murder their sons, and sons their fathers, in cold blood, and that, too, immediately after he had said, "Thou shalt not kill." But why was this bacchanalia of bloodshed ordered? The answer will cause a shudder: "That he (Jehovah) may bestow upon you a blessing this day."‡ To kill was an act of worship. To please God was better than to spare one's children from the edge of the sword. God demanded

* Exodus xxxii, 27-29.

† *Lettres Medites de Napoleon. Le cestre.*

‡ Exodus xxxii, 29.

murder, and not until he was obeyed would he "bless" them! Do we need any further proof that there is only one commandment in the bible: "Thou shalt obey the Lord thy God," that is to say, the priest. If he forbids murder, obey him; if he commands murder, obey him. But the most important point about all this is that both the giving and the breaking of a "moral" commandment is for the purpose of furthering the theological and ritualistic interests. "And the Lord plagued the people," that is to say, he ordered this internecine murder—why? Not because they had violated any of the "moral" commandments, but, mark the excuse given, "because they made the calf."* The most abominable thing in the sight of this priest-made God, is not immorality, but infidelity.

It would be easy to enumerate the so-called "moral" commandments, one after the other, and show how every one of them was ordered broken when the interests of the *creed* required it. "Thou shalt not steal" was revoked again and again, and a thousand encouragements offered to seize the land and goods of others. The commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" was made a mockery of by the express instruction to make a raid on neighboring countries and carry off the young girls by force.† We have reason to be ashamed of Europe, of the Aryan races, for wanting to place such a book into the hands of young and old as the Word of God.

Indeed, without any violence, either to the letter or to the spirit of the bible, we may offer the following as the real Ten Commandments given by God to Moses:

* Exodus xxxii, 35.

† Numbers xxxi, 18.

1. Thou shalt steal everything thou canst — thou shalt plunder, and practice usury.

2. Thou shalt murder the alien and the heathen as well as thy own brother.

3. Thou shalt bear false witness.

4. Thou shalt commit adultery.

5. Thou shalt covet.

6. Thou shalt hate thy neighbor of another faith.

7. Thou shalt persecute.

8. Thou shalt be cruel, and buy and sell human beings.

9. Thou shalt be superstitious.

10. Thou shalt despise woman, but permit a man to marry as many wives, and keep as many concubines as his fancy dictates. And let a man divorce his wife whenever it shall please him to do so.

Space fails us to quote all the texts in the bible which support the above commandments. It would be like reproducing the greater portions of the bible to offer even a partial list of the direct and indirect ways in which the bible lends its authority, as well as encouragement, to the commission of what we would consider criminal acts. Moreover, it would be a very unpleasant task to repeat, or to call attention to, those parts of the bible which this phase of my subject leads me into. And yet I do not see how I can altogether shirk the disagreeable task. The reader has no idea how big a part of the bible is unreadable. If anybody undertook to bring out a cleanly version of the bible for family use, he would soon find that the Old Testament, at least, would have to be left out, almost completely. Dr. Thomas Inman says: "A long experience in life and a retentive memory would lead me to

say that the bible, as we have it, is the first book which leads many youths astray.”*

That Jehovah ordered his people to *steal*, is clearly indicated by the following text:

When ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.†

What they were ordered to do to the Egyptians, they were ordered to do to all the nations they could lay their hands upon. The lands and goods of others were to be seized by force. Stealing was forbidden if the property belonged to a Jew; it was sanctioned if the property belonged to the “heathen.”

Murder is plainly commanded in the following text:

Slay every man his brother, and every man his companion and every man his neighbour.‡

There is hardly a page in the Old Testament which is not red with bloodshed.

Lying was approved by the deity. Moses was commanded to tell a falsehood to Pharaoh, as were many of the other prophets advised to practice deception. Despite all the plagues which God is said to have sent upon the Egyptians to prove his might and power to deliver his people out of bondage, it was found necessary, as a last resort, to tell a lie to the king of Egypt to induce him to permit their departure. Upon being asked by Pharaoh why and where they wanted to go, Moses answered:

The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice

* *Ancient Faiths*, etc., Vol. II, page 77.

† Exodus iii, 21, 22.

‡ Exodus xxxii, 27.

unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.*

While planning to go on an expedition to seize the lands which their God had promised them, they tell Pharaoh that they only desire to hold some kind of a prayer-meeting in the desert, after which they would come back, supposedly to return the jewels of gold and silver they had borrowed from the neighbors. The falsehood was effective when all the miracles had failed. The Egyptians actually, if the story is true, allowed the Jews to rob them before they left.

God also commanded Samuel to lie:

And the Lord said unto Samuel . . . I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord.†

In the same way, the bible, it is to be regretted, sanctions sexual immorality.

And the Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of whoredom.‡

Again, the Lord commands:

When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her . . . thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will.§

Not a word is said about obtaining the woman's consent. And the following:

But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.**

* Exodus v, 3.

† Samuel xvi, 1, 2.

‡ Hosea i, 2.

§ Deuteronomy xxi, 10-14.

** Numbers xxxi, 18.

Such texts show how indifferent the bible is to what we understand by morality.

As to *coveting*: The whole of the biblical instructions was nothing more than a continuous encouragement to the Jews to covet everything that was their neighbors, from the jewelry of the Egyptian, to the lands, the cattle, the homes and daughters of the nations of the earth:

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying . . . I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.*

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.†

But it will be impossible to command people to rob and slay their neighbors, and to covet their homes and women, without at the same time, commanding them to *hate* them.

Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger . . . that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien.‡

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother. . . . unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury.§

Jesus improved upon the Old Testament by calling upon his followers to include in their hatred the members of their own family:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.**

Religious *persecution* is openly sanctioned both in the Old and the New Testaments. Every expression

* Genesis xvii, 3, 8.

† Genesis xiii, 15.

‡ Deuteronomy xiv, 21.

§ Deuteronomy xxiii, 19, 20.

** Luke xiv, 26.

of independence, or disagreement with the priesthood, was blasphemy, and punishable by death.

And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.*

The Bible gives a very long list of "blasphemies" for which the death penalty is ordered — from failing to circumcise one's children, to gathering sticks on the Sabbath. And as to those professing a different faith, the commandment was as follows:

These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.†

Could intolerance go further than that! Other peoples are not to have any gods at all. Even as their lands will be taken away from them, so shall their gods. And since their Jehovah never intended to be the god of anybody else but a Hebrew, it followed that the Jews were the only people privileged to own a god.

Why should "all the high places," where the other nations served their gods, be destroyed? Did not Moses go to Mount Sinai, a high place, to worship Jehovah? Why may not a Gentile have his own high

* Leviticus xxiv, 16.

† Deuteronomy xii, 1-4.

place, as well as a Jew? Surely, the heathen gods on their mountains could not possibly have given a more unmerciful set of commandments than those which Jehovah dictated to Moses. There was no breadth in the God of the Jews. *Live and let live*, or *Think and let think*, is the conquest of modern thought for which we are indebted to Rationalism. We say it, reluctantly, but say it we must, Jehovah was a bigot. How long will the Jews continue to profess a religion which requires of them to live in Europe and America, and in the twentieth century, according to the ways of the desert? If Gentiles, in every country, are in great numbers forsaking Christianity, let the exodus of the Jews from the synagogue be equally earnest and pronounced.

Cruelty was to be the accompaniment of religious persecution.

The descriptions of acts of cruelty against the stranger seem to have given positive pleasure to the writers of the bible, for they enter into the most repulsive details in narrating them:

For the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. . . . Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. . . . Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. . . . Behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.*

For this act of treacherous cruelty Jael was sainted:

* Judges iv, 9, 17-23.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. . . . She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. . . . So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.*

Superstitions of the most degrading type are recommended and their daily practice sanctioned. Though they claimed to be on talking terms with the deity, they had, nevertheless, to cast lots, and resort to sorcery and divination, to find out the mind of the Lord.

Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. . . . And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.†

Could anything be more meaningless?

. . . And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.‡

Only the most hopeless ignorance could credit such a performance.

And Jesus thought that by self-mutilation one could become a candidate for heaven:

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were

* Judges v, 24-31.

† Genesis xv, 9-18.

‡ Exodus xvii, 11-13.

made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

And the four beasts said, Amen.†

VII.

Thou Shalt Despise Women

THE most unfortunate person in the whole bible is a woman. How is it then that the bible has come to be regarded as really the emancipator of woman? Well, that is only one of many fictions about the "Holy" book. Not only is the responsibility for the fall of man, and the existence of such a place as hell, thrown upon woman, because she ate of the forbidden tree; but she is also introduced as a mere fragment of man, made out of one of his ribs. As soon as born she was sold into perpetual slavery.

Thy desire shall be to thy husband, *and he shall rule over thee.*‡

Never once did God promise a daughter to any of his favorites. And girls are completely left out from the family chronicle. In biblical genealogies there are no women. "The Hebrew word used in the bible for 'female,'" says Joseph McCabe, "can not with decency be translated literally into English." Women were strictly excluded from the service of Jehovah. Nor were they privileged to repair to Jerusalem on the stated occasions required by the national worship to appear before Jehovah. It is no wonder that under

* Matthew xix, 12.

† Revelation v, 14.

‡ Genesis iii, 16.

these conditions the women of the bible, as Lecky says, were "of a low order, and certainly far inferior to those of Roman history, or Greek poetry." Paul was inspired to command: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. . . . I suffer not a woman to teach (Paul never could have dreamed of our public schools), nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."*

In the Old Testament motherhood is an act deserving atonement, and rules are given how a woman shall apply for absolution, as it were, after childbirth. If her offspring were a boy, the punishment was lighter than when she gave birth to a girl.†

The commandment for a man to sell his daughter into slavery, as also the institution of polygamy, and concubinage and divorce, extensively practiced by the leaders in the Holy Bible, show what precious little interest Jehovah took in the welfare of woman. The bible continued for centuries—down to the time of the Renaissance—to keep woman in subjection. Even to-day, one of the greatest obstacles in the path of woman is the bible. In a sermon at Saint Crantock's, preached only six years ago, the vicar offered the following reasons for opposing the granting to women the rights and opportunities enjoyed by man:

(1) Man's priority of creation. Adam was first formed, then Eve.

(2) The manner of creation. The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

(3) The purport of creation. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

(4) Results in creation. The man is the image of the glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

* I Timothy ii, 11, 12.

† Leviticus xii, 2-5.

(5) Woman's priority in the fall. Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.

(6) The marriage relation. As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands.

(7) The headship of man and woman. The head of every man is Christ, but the head of the woman is man.

For this one sin alone — its insult and injustice to woman — we should never make our peace with the bible. Worse than all its miracles, fables, absurdities, immoralities, contradictions, indecencies, is its tyranny over woman because she is *weak*. This is unpardonable.

It is no defense to say that allowance must be made for the remote times in which these barbarities were committed. It is not the morality of the "times" but the morality of an infallible book that is under discussion. Moreover, why could not the people who daily saw God and heard from him, be at least as decent as their "heathen" neighbors? The Midianites, whose virgin daughters Moses ordered his followers to abduct, after all the rest of the inhabitants had been put to death, had sheltered Moses for forty years when he fled for his life from Egypt.* Their hospitality is repaid by Moses in this unspeakable fashion. Why could not Moses be as honorable and humane as the Midianites? Even by the admissions of the bible itself, the nations whom Jehovah ordered to be exterminated were very much more hospitable than the Jews. Had Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia or Persia followed the example of the Jews, there would not have been any Jews left in the world to-day. And the fact that, after long years of captivity in heathen

* Exodus ii, 15.

countries, when permission was given the Jews to return to Jerusalem, many of them refused to do so, preferring a foreign country to their own, is decisive proof that the "heathen" did not treat the Jews so unmercifully as Jehovah wanted the Jews to treat the heathen. I can protest against the massacre of the Christians by the Turks, or of the Jews by the Christians, because I do not believe the bible is binding upon my conscience. But how can a Christian or a Jew plead for liberty of conscience? How can a Jew or a Christian protest against being massacred while hugging to his bosom a book which commands and approves of the most inhuman treatment of one people by another?

My forehead throbs as I quote these forbidden texts, and my pulse rises. But I have the consolation that the book is not true, that the wild stories it tells about Jews and Christians had no basis in history. If I could only get the devout Jews and Christians to realize this!

VIII.

The Sermon on the Mount

HOWEVER imperfect the teachings of others in the Old and New Testament might be, it is urged that Jesus himself is the one infallible revelation of God, and that even if everything else is lost, nothing is really lost so long as Jesus abides. This is the remaining consolation of the apologists of the bible. No reasons are given as to why, in an inspired book, there should be only one person who is really inspired. Nor do these "new theologians" stop to

think that such an admission is equivalent to a plea of guilty — for if no one but Jesus in the bible is to be trusted, then Jesus can not be trusted either. In plain words Jesus tells his hearers that they must believe in him, because Moses and the prophets testify of him. Repeatedly Jesus expressed his unquestioning belief in the Old Testament. He had come not to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it. And he expressly told them, that there was no necessity for any one to come down from heaven to teach the people, for “if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”* But if “Moses and the prophets” are not to be depended upon, what becomes of Jesus’ testimony of them? Jesus says “Moses and the prophets were of God,” the “new theologians” say they were not. In the meantime, the same “new theologians” say that Jesus knew what he was talking about.

But the “new theologians,” who have nearly thrown overboard everything else, still cling, or pretend to cling, so ardently to Jesus as a moral teacher, because of the supposed beauty of the Sermon on the Mount, and the other teachings of Jesus. This is not the first time that the present writer makes the Sermon on the Mount a subject for comment.† There are many fine passages in the collection of utterances attributed to Jesus, but we have the same objection against the moral teachings of Jesus that we have against the moral teachings of Moses and the prophets. The best in Jesus’ sermons are to be found in the Old Testament, and there is enough of the worst in

* Luke xvi, 31.

† Consult the author’s *Is the Morality of Jesus Sound?*

the Old Testament in the sayings attributed to Jesus to make his teachings unfit, in the main, for universal uses.

On one theme all parts of the bible are in perfect unison — God comes before man. To us this is the negation of morality. "Blessed are the pure in heart," preaches Jesus; and why are the pure blessed? "Because," is the answer, "they shall see God." There is not a word said about the social worth of personal and public purity of heart. Not a word that to be pure is to bless the world in which one lives, or that by being pure we help to make life on earth sweeter and more lovable. The idea that to be pure in thought and conduct is the way to serve humanity, and make this earth a heaven, does not occur to Jesus at all. He is not interested either in humanity or in this earth. His eyes are fixed upon the mists beyond. His one thought is of the invisible God, not of man who is made of flesh and blood.

And when the "purity" required is examined, it will be found that, in consonance with the Old Testament, purity of belief is what is meant by it. The thief on the cross would see God, not because he was pure in heart, but because he believed before he died. In the same way the other virtues are recommended, not for their civic values, not as the means of social well-being and blessedness, but as auxiliaries to piety, namely, to the worship of God.

That Jesus had no message to man is seen in his attempt to shift the center of gravity, so to speak, from this world to the next. He would take away from man the world in the hand, for the one hidden away in the clouds. "Blessed are ye that hunger

now," cries Jesus to the starving multitude, "for ye shall be filled."* But *when?* It reads very much like the vague and airy promises which a politician makes to his constituents when he is bidding for votes. "Give us bread *now*," cry the poor. Can the famished eat a promise for bread? But Jesus was not interested in helping them "now." He had come to reveal God and his glory, not to make the world a happy home for man. He prayed for and predicted the speedy destruction of the world; why, then, should he labor for its betterment? And in his "next world" is there really going to be no more poverty? Let us read what Jesus says:

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.
. . . Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.†

In the dim, distant day those who hunger now will have all that they can eat, but those who now are filled will starve. What then is the advantage of that future day over the *now*? Instead of doing away with hunger, it is to be shifted on to another set of people. There will be just as much poverty in the beautiful future Jesus predicts, as there is to-day, only the people who are poor here, will be rich there, and the rich now, will be the poor then. Is there any inspiration in such a prospect? Is it not like clinging to a straw, to expect help from such haphazard utterances as these? What a serious world desires to know is not how to "beat around the bush," but how to remedy real evils. By taking the bread from one man and giving it to another, we neither add to the quantity of food, nor diminish the stress of poverty. Yet that is precisely

* Luke vi, 21.

† Luke vi, 21-25.

the solution Jesus proposes with such a flourish of trumpets. Is it any wonder that people do not care for his heaven, or that humanity has turned away from Jesus to look for help elsewhere? Again Jesus says:

Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. . . .
Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.*

Is it not fantastic? Jesus seems to believe that to laugh *now* is a crime; and yet he holds it up as a future reward to those who weep now. There is an oriental saying that the food which each one that comes into the world needs, is set apart for him by Allah; he may eat it all at once, and starve the rest of his life, or use it moderately, and have enough to last him all the days of his life. Likewise, Jesus appears to be of the belief that there is just so much happiness set apart for man; he can take it in this world, and go to *hades* in the next; or he can make this world a place of mourning, and go to heaven in the next. Therefore, "Woe to those who want their heaven here, for they shall be tormented forever after, and blessed are those who mourn and weep here, for they shall laugh in the hereafter." Is this sense?

According to Jesus, as long as a man is weeping and mourning he is "blessed," but as soon as he begins to laugh, then "woe" unto him. In the same way, a man is "blessed" as long as he is hungry, but the moment he is "filled" Jesus turns upon him with a "woe unto you." Who could fail to draw the conclusion from such teaching that to help people to be happy *now*, is to expose them to the "woe unto you" of God, and to help people out of poverty now, is to

* Luke vi, 21-25.

bring upon their heads the curse of the future; and that, therefore, we should let the poor be the poor, and the rich, the rich — leaving it to the unknown future to settle all accounts. Such a teacher deserves to have only the unthinking for his disciples.

One Sunday in June, about three years ago, I went to hear the Rev. Dr. Aked, of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, in New York city. For his scripture lesson he read the parable of the "Wheat and the Tares."* This is about a farmer who sows good seed in his field. But while he was asleep, his enemies came and sowed tares among the wheat. As the blades sprang up "and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." The farm-hands, when they saw this, asked the owner for permission to destroy the tares. "Nay," replied the master, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

What edification is there in such a story? To bring a church full of people together — tired, busy, perplexed, hungering for ideas, for truth, for beauty — only to tell them that the tares must not be touched or separated even from the wheat until some day in the future, some judgment day in the clouds, when the Lord of the harvest shall gather up the tares to be burned, and the wheat to be deposited in his chests! Could anything be more destructive of human endeavor and hope than this shifting of all responsibility

* Matthew xiii, 24-30.

upon God and the future? If the parable has any meaning, it is this: Let every field become rank with weeds, and let nothing be done to destroy the weeds *now* — the future will take care of that. The *future* is the one great asset of the priest. "Wait until you die," is his answer to every challenge to show present results.

The weeds injure the wheat during the time that the crop is growing, and not after it is ready to be harvested. What is gained by burning up the tares when they can no longer hurt the wheat and after they have done all the harm they could to the grain by stealing sun and moisture from them? Besides, there is just as much danger of gathering up the wheat with the tares at harvest time as there is of rooting up the wheat with the tares while they are growing together. Why postpone the purging process? Why let a child, for example, grow up to be a criminal to be hanged, if there is a way of saving him from evil associations earlier in life? What farmer or educator will follow the advice of Jesus, to let the bad and the good alone until judgment day?

Suppose, instead of such an unprofitable story, with its impracticable lesson, and its suggestion of *laissez faire*, the preacher had read the page from Ralph Waldo Emerson, which contains a grander passage than is to be found in the whole bible, "My freedom is part of my faith"; or suppose he had read to his audience the page from Thomas Paine in which occurs that thrilling and musical pæan, "Where liberty is not, there is my country" — and why? Not to wait until some distant day, but to bring about and share with them now, and here, the blessings of liberty; or

suppose the preacher had greeted his hearers with the words of Goethe, "In the whole, the good, the true, the beautiful, resolve to live." Would he not have read to them from a better bible?

But the gem in the Sermon on the Mount is supposed to be the, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."* This advice is supplemented with the "Love your enemies," which is claimed to be the noblest utterance in all religious literature. The philosophy underlying these commandments is the same which we found in the parable of the "Wheat and the Tares." Even as the tares are to be allowed to have their way in a wheat field, evil is not to be resisted in the world of men, but let alone. It is not the business of man, according to Jesus, to effect reforms; he must leave it all to God. In his own time, and in his own way, God will fill the hungry and punish the rich; he will burn the tares and save the wheat; and he will reward the good and destroy the evil.

This Asiatic fatalism is quite consistent with the belief in an all-wise and powerful being at the head of affairs. If God were not almighty, we might assist him in his work; or if he were not all-wise, we might enlighten him on some things, but being almighty, and all-wise, he does not wish any meddling on our part. Besides, if we resist evil, or weed the tares, or fight poverty and misery, we might think that it is *our* efforts which have made the world better. But that is *taboo*. Really, Jesus is quite right; there is no

* Matthew v, 39.

room for human effort where an infinite being is doing things. The plea that God wants us to help him, because if we neglect to do our part, neither will he do his, is nonsensical. An attitude of passivity is alone becoming to a believer. To bestir oneself about the tares, or the evil in the world, is to show that one has lost faith in the Lord of the harvest. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," is the word of inspiration.

And could anything be more pessimistic than "Resist not evil?" If not the evil, what then shall man resist? Nothing? But he will fall into decay unless he resists the forces that menace his well being. And why was man made a moral agent or created in the "divine" image if he is to let the powers of darkness have their way, instead of girding himself for battle against them? But the decline of man is desired because that is the only way the world may come to an end, and God and his heaven ushered in. Such is the philosophy of Jesus.

If God does not wish us to "resist evil," pray what is the devil's pleasure? We have been told that the devil always wants us to do the things which God has forbidden. Does he, then, want us to resist evil? Not to resist the agencies of evil, is not to resist the devil, if there is such a being; and not to resist the devil is to surrender to him, which is just what he would want us to do.

The Sermon on the Mount, if complied with, would lead the world to an *impasse*. We must not resist the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus, and, according to the same teacher, we must not resist evil either. But unless the Holy Spirit and evil are the same, how can

we be as hospitable or as passive toward the one as toward the other? We must stand still and let God work in us his purposes, says the bible, and, according to the same book, we are to be equally passive to the operations of the Evil One. Is such advice intelligible? Could anything be more confusing and bewildering to the moral sense than so contradictory a commandment? If the gospel writers had put in Jesus' mouth the words, "I am the darkness of the world," they would not have been very far wrong.

Why resist not evil? If evil is evil, and if we have power to resist it, why may we not do so? What is morality but the exercise of the power of resistance against evil? The idea that by resisting evil we become evil ourselves, as Tolstoi maintains, is as much a conundrum as the text itself. Did not Jesus resist the devil in the wilderness? Did he not drive the evil spirits out of his patients? Did he not denounce the scribes and Pharisees who would not accept his Messiahship? And did he not scourge the money-changers out of the temple court, and overturn their tables by sheer physical force? Why did he resist evil himself? And did such resistance degrade him?

In all probability, the reason we are warned against resisting evil is that evil is one of the agencies God works by, and, therefore, to resist it is to rebel against God. But not to resist evil is to do evil. "If any man," says Jesus, in this famous sermon, "will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."* But there need be no law courts, even, to go to, if we will only notify the robbers in

* Matthew v, 40.

advance that they may have all they can lay their hands on. Why not strip ourselves for the benefit of the oppressor and thereby save him also from the trouble of suing us for anything? Is the above advice given for the benefit of the honest man or the robber? Surely the latter will not object to being given more than he sought to steal. And why should an honest man labor to possess anything, since he must permit the thief and the brigand to enjoy all the fruits of his own economy and thrift? By what process of ratiocination does Jesus arrive at the conclusion that the man of fraud and violence should not only not be denied any demand he may make upon us, but that he should have more, nay all we have earned and saved. Is not this nihilism?

No extraordinary intelligence is needed to see what would happen to the state that decided to live up to the teachings of Christ. Every precaution to protect our homes and families would be condemned as unchristian. Instead of throwing the burglar out, or arousing the police to pursue and arrest him, we must thank him for giving us an opportunity to practice the rare "virtue" of giving also the other coat, as well as of turning also the other cheek to him. If the brigand strikes us once, we must encourage him for a second blow; if he has killed but one member of the family, he must be pampered into further indulgence in his bloody pastime. Is this the Christian religion? Surely it is not the religion of common sense. But Jesus does not seem to reflect upon the consequences to the robbers themselves of this policy of non-resistance, and of giving freely to him that would borrow of us. In order to be able to take or borrow of one's neighbor,

that neighbor must have something. But to encourage the having of things, the possessor of things must be protected. Jesus, by taking away this protection, endangers the creation of wealth of any kind. What is the robber or the beggar to take when there is nothing to take? And there will be nothing to take when the industrious are sacrificed to the lazy and the vicious. Jesus strikes at the roots of civilization by his doctrine of "let alone." And that is really what he is after. Wealth, culture, liberty, help to make us fonder of this world than of the next, fonder of things than of God! And that, a jealous religion will not tolerate.

We are aware of the many ingenious explanations proposed to retain the Sermon on the Mount in the creeds, though it is diligently excluded from life. Praise the Sermon on the Mount, but do not practice it, seems to express the attitude of the church. Jesus is not supposed to have really meant what he said about "turning the other cheek," or allowing the oppressor his way. What he was trying to say, argue the commentators, was that we should be patient under provocation, not given to seeking vengeance; and that we should be generous to the indigent and the unfortunate. That was what Jesus wanted to say, according to defenders of the bible; but instead of saying that, he said something so totally different that a large army of commentators is kept busy trying to excuse and explain what he really said.

The world needs a teacher who can say what he means, and mean what he says. If his commentators can make themselves understood why could not Jesus? Besides, it is not right to be patient with wrong, or

generous to the oppressor. Shakespeare's thought was very much more wholesome when he said that kindness to the guilty is injustice to the honest.

Instead of these nihilistic or pessimistic utterances, which no self-respecting nation will translate into daily life, suppose Jesus had said, "Not to resist crime is also a crime." Suppose he had said, "If ever evil, or darkness, or poverty, is to be conquered, it will be by the efforts of man only." But Jesus was trying to put man to sleep, not to provoke him into action against the enemies of his progress. Compare the three simple but puissant commandments of Volney, the author of "The Ruins," to the whimsical ethics of the Sermon on the Mount:

I.—*Preserve thyself!*

This is the first task to which man must apply his head and hands. He must *preserve* himself. A thousand things conspire against his life. He is beset by dangers and temptations. Under every stone lurks a menace to his well being. He must compel a place for himself in nature, and be able to hold it against all rivals.

II.—*Instruct thyself!*

Mark the positiveness of both commandments. By being *active*, not by passivity, will man succeed, both in self-preservation and self-instruction. Once we are confident of our standing in nature, and reasonably sure of our daily bread, it is our high privilege to start on the quest for knowledge. "Instruct thyself!" Knowledge is the all-conquering weapon. Know thyself, thy fellows, thy world. The sun is the light of the body; knowledge is the light of the mind.

III.—*Moderate thyself!*

Having conquered the means which assure self-preservation, and having through much labor acquired science — the intellectual sun which turns man's night into day — the next virtue, the practice of which alone can enable man to enjoy the life he has learned to preserve, and the arts and pleasures he has created through knowledge, is to put a wholesome check upon his appetites by exercising moderation. Not until a man can moderate himself does he really become a moral, that is to say, a superior, being — a conqueror who can hold his possessions. In one of his romances, Voltaire makes the first man ask his Maker what he must do to get the most beauty and joy out of life. The answer to this question is also Voltaire's: "Practice Moderation."

How simple are all the commandments of Reason compared with the contradictions of Revelation! There is not one word of Reason ever spoken which has lost either its authority or beauty, while it is admitted by the believers themselves that more than half of the divine Revelation has become obsolete. To the question, "Why do not men obey the ordinances and commandments in the Old Testament?" the answer of the churches is, "The times have changed," or, "They were meant only for the Jews." Revelations grow old and expire. Reason, like the sun, rises daily to give unto each day its daily light. If Rationalists ever succeed in building a Hall of Reason, the two commandments which they will inscribe over its entrance will never need revision:

1. *Speak according to knowledge.*
2. *Act according to conscience.*

IX.

The Parables of Jesus

JESUS is supposed to be the vein of gold in the bible. As already intimated, if the whole book is of God, it is difficult to see why certain portions of it should be more or less godly than others. Among the parables of Jesus, that of the "Prodigal Son" is said to be one of the most inspiring. It is the story of a young man who borrows in advance his portion of his father's wealth, while the latter is still living, and leaves home. After wasting his inheritance by riotous living, he finds himself face to face with starvation. The worst thing happens to him that might happen to a pious Jew — he is compelled to take care of a herd of swine, and to eat of their food. In this condition, he remembers that his father is still rich, with plenty of servants, and food for everybody. He decides to go back to him, just as he is, and to throw himself upon his mercy. It never occurs to him to try and make for himself a good reputation before he returns to his father, or to earn back the wealth he has squandered by a life of debauchery. Why should he? It is not his father's respect he wants, but his forgiveness. His foolish father does just as the prodigal expected; he gives him a royal welcome. A ring is slipped on his finger, the richest robe is thrown over his shoulders, and the fatted calf is killed for him.

Nobody will claim that the good-for-nothing son deserved all these honors. Indeed, it is quite plainly insinuated that he is honored for being a repentant

sinner, unlike his elder brother, who had no need of repentance, because he remained at home and did his duty. To eat the "fatted calf," it is necessary to be a great sinner, suing for mercy. For the honest, who have no need to cry for forgiveness, there are no banquets. This is shown by the treatment accorded the other son, who had not asked for his portion of the inheritance, and had not wasted his years and money in self-indulgence, who had not deserted his aged father, but stood at his side in the home and the vineyard, doing also the work of the younger brother who had run away from home. No favors are conferred upon him, no feast is given in his honor, and strangest of all, he is not even invited to the party. It is by accident that he finds out about the costly banquet at which his prodigal brother was being entertained, while he himself was toiling in the fields. Who ate the fatted calf? Not the man who raised it, but the man who had lost all claim upon the fruits of his brother's or father's toil. Is this the way to encourage virtue? Rob the honest son who has not shirked labor — who has been faithful, devoted and frugal — to feast the prodigal, who has already consumed one fortune and is now begging for another? *Begging*, I say, for the idea of earning one is very disagreeable to prodigals. As long as there is a "father" who is willing to treat his prodigal son better than the worthy son, prodigals will not be wanting in the world.

And this is the gem of the collection over which we are supposed to go into ecstasies!

But we must read between the lines; the purpose of Jesus, or whoever was the author of the parable, was to show that the greater the sinner, greater still

is the welcome that awaits him. And this welcome is not to be deserved, or earned through merit; it is given as a favor. God, whom the father in the parable typifies, cares little for character. People must not flatter themselves that they are saved because they deserve it. Look at the worthy elder son who had done his duty: he was not invited to the feast. Look at the prodigal son, who had descended to the level of the swine; he was "dined and wined." Now we understand why the malefactor on the cross was saved, and all his crimes wiped out in the twinkling of an eye. Had he been a better man than he was, or had he been innocent of the crimes for which he was crucified, there would have been no chance for him. Nor does Jesus say a word about the subsequent conduct of the forgiven prodigal? Did he make amends for the harm he had done to others by his selfishness? Was he really a changed character after he was *feted*? Not a word. The promise Jesus holds out to the sinner is not reform, but forgiveness.

Let us take another parable: A very rich farmer, or landlord, goes out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. He hired some very early in the day; others about the noon hour, and others again as late as "the eleventh hour," that is to say, just an hour before the close of day. When the laborers came to receive their pay for the day's work, the landlord paid the man who had put in a full day just as much as he paid those who had only worked for one short hour. Naturally, the men who had borne the brunt of the hot day, and had done most of the work, complained. To which the lord of the vineyard made this reply: "Is it not lawful for me to do

what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"* And turning to his disciples, Jesus said: "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen."† The full meaning of which is that an employer's or the Lord's whim is law.

What man of affairs can derive any benefit from such a parable? But the object of Jesus, in this, as in the former parable, is to show the independence of God of what we would call the moral law. God is not bound by any considerations of justice. He is an oriental who showers favors or withholds them just as his pleasure dictates. And whatever he gives is a *favor*, and not a debt which he must pay because of any merit on the part of anybody. If wages are to be distributed according to the quality and quantity of the work done, then what is there left for God to do?

To Jesus, God was something like a Turkish sultan of the olden days who exalted his barber to the rank of a grand *vizier*, and humbled the *vizier* to the level of a keeper of his stables, all in one night, to show that his pleasure is above any consideration of justice and character. But this is not morality; this is caprice. To pay the man who has worked only for one hour as much as the man who has worked all day long, is to rob the latter of his dues. The Asiatics may submit to it, but the American or European laborer will not. Because he is the sultan, or because he is God, is no excuse for such eccentricity. No; you are not at liberty to pay as you please, or to make contracts which sacrifice justice to whim.

* Matthew xx, 15.

† Matthew xx, 16.

In the parable of Lazarus and *Dives*, the fondness of the bible for the worthless, the fallen, the good for nothing, so to speak, becomes all the more evident. At the door of a rich man sits a miserable beggar. He is not only poor, but also diseased. Like many an oriental *fakir*, he is covered with sores, which by their stench attract the hungry dogs to his person. There he sits all day long — a menace to the public health, and an object of disgust. When this beggar dies, he is carried by angels straight to Abraham's bosom. It is, of course, a pity he had to remain on earth so long before entering Paradise. But what had he done to deserve so great a reward? We might as well ask what the prodigal son had done to deserve the "fatted calf," or the "eleventh-hour laborer" to deserve a full day's wages.

Nor is it true that Lazarus was saved for the inner beauty of his character. As I have shown elsewhere,* by refusing a few drops of water to cool the parched tongue of the man who had given him of the crumbs of his table on earth, Lazarus proved himself to be as small of soul as he was leprous of body. But the point of the parable is to show that a man is saved, not because he deserves salvation, but because God takes a fancy to him. And the more unworthy the subject, the better it illustrates that it is whim, and not justice, that presides over the destinies of man. We may plead with justice; against whim we are helpless. It is the sense of this helplessness of man in the hands of a whimsical God that makes Christianity so pessimistic. Of course, for the "elect" favor and whim are

* *Is the Morality of Jesus Sound?*

better than law and justice; and for the mediocre and the sinner, it is a good thing that merit or character does not count for anything before God. But what about those who have no other "pull" than their own self-respect and honor? And the dogma of total depravity has been invented to relieve the duty of being just to any one, since all mankind deserves to be damned.

The same indifference to reason is shown in the next parable: A certain slave owed his king the enormous sum of ten thousand talents. In round numbers a talent is worth one thousand dollars. Accordingly this slave was indebted to his royal master for the sum of ten million dollars. A *slave* owing more money than any one king ever owned in Jesus' day! How he incurred this impossible debt is not explained. But the king pressed the slave for payment. Whereupon the slave fell at his sovereign's feet and begged for mercy. As expected, the king, with a wave of his hand, makes the slave a present of the ten million dollars which he owes, thereby canceling the entire indebtedness. Does this not remind us of the parable of the prodigal son? Even as he was forgiven the waste and debauchery which had disgraced him, this slave is quickly freed from his obligation. The motive in making the debt a fabulous one was to emphasize the generosity of the sovereign. This brings us to the conclusion already announced, that great sinners are preferred to little ones, because they help to show more directly that it is not character or personal merit that saves, or even helps a man with God, but pure patronage on the part of the deity. Salvation is a favor. That is the burden of the parables of Jesus.

The slave, however, fails to be as generous toward his debtors as his lord was to him. Instead of canceling their obligations as his own had been, he cast them into prison. When the king heard of this he summoned the slave into his presence, and said to him: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"* In other words, debtors should be allowed to keep what they have borrowed for the mere asking. The whole tenor of the parable is anti-social. To follow such teaching is to head toward bankruptcy. There will be no lenders, if there are to be no collections. Once more Jesus sacrifices the worthy members of society to the spendthrifts and the prodigals. The man who can lend is the real benefactor, not the borrower; but Jesus is interested in saving the latter, and in such a way as to ruin the former. But the shortsightedness of this policy, as already pointed out, is seen in its effects upon the creator and conservator of wealth—he will stop saving, and then what is the borrower going to do? Jesus' advice practically amounts to this: "Allow your debtors to defraud you." But the process will kill the debtor as well as the lender.

If Jesus really wanted to encourage mendicancy, and to make this earth a paradise for the beggar, he could not have served his purpose better than by such a parable, or by the advice to "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."† The beggar could not wish for

* Matthew xviii, 32-33.

† Matthew v, 42.

a stronger endorsement of his profession. Everything belongs to the beggar, and he is to have what he wants, not for any work he may do in return, but because he wants it.

In the Lord's Prayer, one of the petitions reads: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," which really means, "We have allowed our neighbors to impose upon us; you must allow us, Lord, to impose upon you." Jesus could have found a hundred other ways of recommending compassion for the weak and the unfortunate, if that were really what he was aiming at. But his purpose was to show that the borrower, the beggar, the prodigal, the good-for-nothing, are the favored children of God. It is not the strong, the self-reliant, the industrious, the successful, whom God has chosen for his kingdom, but "the foolish of this world." And why? The question has already been answered: to show that it is not merit or character that saves, but the grace of God. By saving the worthless, God gets all the glory; while if he saved the strong and the virtuous, it might be said that it was their character which helped to save them. "My name is Jealous,"* saith the Lord.

But Jesus does not forget to speak a good word also for the robber. Indeed the beggar and the robber belong to the same profession. And if anything, the robber's is the more respectable calling. He does not whine and weep and cant as the beggar does, to get his neighbor's goods; he takes it by force, or craft, which is better than pious prating. The robber risks his life, shows skill and daring, and is not so prosaic,

* Exodus xxxiv, 14.

or at all sanctimonious, like the beggar. But, in the final analysis, they are partners in business. They are both agreed that their rich neighbors must not object to part with their possessions on demand. If Jesus had the beggar in his mind when he commanded, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away," he had the welfare of the highway robber in mind when he commanded: "If any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." In the parable of the Good Samaritan, which, from our point of view, comes nearest to being the most innocent and harmless among the parables, while Jesus deservedly lauds the humanity of the Samaritan toward his fellow man, who had fallen among thieves, there is not a word said in condemnation of the robber. A splendid opportunity to denounce the lax conditions which made life and property insecure, which encouraged plunder and murder along the highways of travel and commerce, was overlooked by Jesus. He fails to call upon the authorities to take measures to prevent the repetition of such crimes as he has been describing. He does not call upon the officers of the law to pursue and catch the thief, and mete out to him the punishment he deserves. Nothing of this. He praises the pity, the compassion of the Samaritan, which praise was well deserved, but a man has not done his best when he has helped a victim of the robbers to a dinner and a bed — he must protect future travelers from such outrages by assisting in the arrest and prompt punishment of the criminal. But Jesus is not interested in reforming robbers, or converting beggars into productive citizens. In fact, one reading between the lines can not avoid the

conclusion that Jesus would let the robbers alone, inasmuch as they give the good Samaritan a chance to practice piety and to show compassion. The beggar and the robber you always have with you, Jesus seems to say, for how can men be kind and forgiving without them?

In conclusion, the lesson of the parables, to an unprejudiced mind, is this: the more worthless and degraded a man, the more loaded down with debts, the more dangerous he is to his fellows, the more suitable he will be to prove that God saves whom he wishes, independent of the question of merit, and that "the righteousness of man is as filthy rags."* A more opprobrious phrase could not have been used to express utter contempt for human virtues. According to the Gospel, "the whores and harlots," as well as beggars and robbers,† "shall enter the kingdom of God," "before the righteous, or the wise of this world."‡ But upon what grounds?

"It is my whim."

* Isaiah lxiv, 6.

† "Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."—Matthew xxi, 31.

‡ For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."—I Corinthians i, 27. Paul also states that the way to be wise is by becoming a fool: ". . . let him become a fool, that he may be wise."—I Corinthians iii, 18.

PART VII.

I.

A Better Bible

I AM not able to say what makes a book "holy," but I would like to give my idea of a good book. No book deserves to be called good or great which does not grapple with the problems of life in such an open and disinterested way as to challenge the most unsparing tests which may be applied to its conclusions, or to the methods by which it has arrived at them. The book that objects to or fears criticism, or is injured by it, is certainly not a great book. Even as gold outlives the fire, a great book must outlive criticism.

The works of such men as Copernicus and La Place, and of Galileo and Herschel, who opened up for us the heavens, are truly great, for the reason that not only do they not plead for protection against criticism, but they resist all the strain that the freest and boldest criticism can bring to bear upon them. The same is true of the works of Darwin, Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, who need neither the sword of the king nor the curse of the priest to prove their conclusions true. And men like Shakespeare, who have circumnavigated the human intellect, and sailed around the globe of beauty and truth, may justly be proud of their work, because criticism can no more hurt them than fire the gold. Can the bible stand the test which proves greatness? To answer this question we have only to observe

how vehemently the bible objects to criticism: "He that believeth not shall be damned," and "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed" — that is to say, who believe blindly. And the defenders of the bible have, alas! committed every conceivable crime in their effort to prevent criticism of the bible. Does this prove the greatness of the bible?

Let us make a brief comparison between the Book of God and some of the books of man. Suppose we wished to teach the splendid truth of the solidarity of the human race — the oneness of mankind — is there anything, either in the New or the Old Testament, which in breadth or beauty approaches the thoughts of the pagan philosophers on this subject?

I am a citizen of the world.—*Socrates.*

Nature ordains that a man should wish the good of every man, whoever he may be, and for this very reason — that he is a man.—*Cicero.*

Did any Jew, or Christian, ever say anything like that?

I was not born for one corner; my country is this whole world.—*Seneca.*

And it was not a slave, but a citizen of the proudest empire the world ever saw, who thus opens his sympathies to embrace the whole of the human family. Where is the bible prophet, or apostle, who could transcend creed and country with the same *elan*?

The much admired *Republic* of Zeno aimed simply at this, that neither in cities nor towns we should live under distinct laws, one from another, but should look on all men as our fellow countrymen and citizens . . . like a flock feeding together with equal rights in a common pasture.—*Plutarch.**

* *The Fortune of Alexander*, 6.

What would not Jews or Christians give for such a passage in their "holy" book! How proudly the clergy would quote it, to prove the divinity of their religion, if this beautiful gem sparkled somewhere within the covers of their bible!

I am a man, and nothing human can be foreign to me.—*Terrence.*

A sentiment like that makes the whole page which expresses it of solid gold. In vain do we look for so big an utterance in "infallible" books. To the Hebrew there was no world outside Israel, and to Jesus all that came before him were "thieves and robbers." Not until Christianity crossed over into Europe did its missionaries discover that "God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth," though even then it was a creed they had to accept or perish.

In the name of the universal brotherhood which binds together all men under the common father of nature.

Nature is the only impartial father. The chosen people of this father are those of whatever race and religion who conquer knowledge and follow Reason.—*Quintillian.*

Love mankind.—*Antoninus.*

Is it not better than the "love one another," of Jesus, which really meant, "love only your fellow-believer"? Jesus declared that it will be worse for those who rejected him and his apostles, on the last day, than for Sodom and Gomorrah, which were consumed by fire from heaven.

What good man will look on any suffering as foreign to himself?—*Juvenal.*

The Universe is but a great city; never, in reply to the question to what country you belong, say you are an Athenian, or a Corinthian, but say you are a Cosmopolitan—a citizen of the world.—*Epictetus.**

But it was not only in their universalism that the

* *Discourses* i, 9.

European writers excelled the Asiatic seers and miracle-workers. It has been persistently claimed that both love and justice are exclusively biblical virtues. We regret to say that this is another untruth, the extensive circulation of which was deemed necessary to protect the bible against its rivals.

Love is the foundation of the law.—*Cicero*.

Sympathy is what distinguishes us from brutes.—*Juvenal*.

The love of all to all.—*Pythagoras*.

He who commits injustice is ever made more wretched than he who suffers it. It is never right to return an injury.—*Plato*.

We should be good to our enemy and make him our friend.—*Cleobulus*.

Ask thyself daily to how many ill-minded persons thou hast shown a kind disposition.—*Antoninus*.

To the very end of life we will be in action, we will not cease to labor for the common weal, to help individuals, to give aid even to our enemies.—*Seneca*.

Moreover, the motives which the philosophers held forth were very much more creditable to human nature than the rewards, either here or in the next world, which the bible held out as inducements to action.

What more dost thou want when thou hast done a man a service than the fact of having done it? Art thou not content to have done something conformable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it, as if the eye demanded a recompense for seeing, or the foot for walking?—*Seneca*.*

If so sweet and sane, so large and pure a sentiment could be found in any part of the Word of God, I shall forever after keep my mouth closed. The *servitude* of man, not the *service* of man, is the theme of the bible; and if Jesus said that the charities should be done in secret, it was because that was the best way to secure a public reward. "And your father which seeth in secret," said Jesus, "will reward you openly."

* *De Benef* ix, 41.

The secrecy recommended was a matter of policy. "Reward" is the constant refrain in the bible. Promises of territory, lands, cattle, jewelry, oil and wine, women and girls, in the Old Testament; and in the new, thrones, crowns, golden streets, harps, robes, and endless life beyond the clouds, are the inducements held out to the devotee.

Another equally frequent and equally unfounded assertion of the pulpit has been that but for the bible there would have been no hospitals in the world, or any interest in the poor, by the rich. The defenders of the bible seem to feel that it is only by shutting their eyes and closing their ears that they can continue to believe that the Jews were the only "inspired" people in the world. In the first place, hospitals are more of a necessity in the modern world than they were in olden times. Science has taught us to apply method and system in the department of philanthropy as in that of business, while formerly the care of the needy was largely a private matter. Besides, our cities are bigger, and our populations more heterogeneous, and the struggle for existence more intense to-day, than ever before. We have hospitals to-day, in self-defense, if not for any other reason. Our own peace and comfort would be disturbed and our door-steps and business offices, as well as homes, would be converted into hospitals, if the State, or public enterprise, did not undertake in some systematic way the housing and nursing of the sick and the unfortunate. It is not only from charity that we have hospitals to-day. We support them also from necessity.

To say, however, that the ancients, being deprived of the bible, took no interest in the care of the sick,

or the hungry, is a clear misrepresentation. If the bible is the hospital builder, how many hospitals did the Old Testament people build in Palestine under the reign of David or Solomon? Was there ever a single movement started in Palestine for the protection of the oppressed or the unfortunate of the world? In his *Paganism and Christianity*, J. H. Farrer, speaking of the practice of charity in the pre-Christian world, cites the examples of Cimon the Athenian giving of his abundance to feed the poor and clothe the naked; of the Lacedæmonians supplying the people of Smyrna with food in time of scarcity, and replying, when thanked for it, that they only deprived themselves and their cattle of a dinner; of Apollonius reminding Vespasian that the supply of the needs of the poor was one of the best uses of a sovereign's wealth; of Arcesilaus visiting Apelles, and, to relieve him of the indigence to which sickness had reduced him, placing twenty drachms under his pillow, while pretending to make him more comfortable; of the Roman nobles, after the accident to the amphitheater at Fidenæ whereby fifty thousand persons were killed or wounded, opening their houses and procuring doctors and relief for the victims; of all the cities of Asia relieving with money or shelter the victims of the great earthquake in Smyrna in 177 A.D.* Seneca's description of the wise man offering aid to the shipwrecked, hospitality to the exile, money to the needy, redeeming prisoners from their chains, releasing them from the arena, and giving sepulture to the criminal,† is clearly a picture drawn from nature and daily life,

* *Aristides* i, 260.

† *De Clementia* ii, 6.

not from his imagination; and to suppose that such deeds required the impulse of the church to make them more common is to suppose that human nature itself changed with the change that came over religion.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, gives the following touching description of the behavior of the ancient Pagans in the presence of the suffering and distress caused by the great calamity in Smyrna:

The grandees of Rome displayed their humanity on this occasion; they threw open their doors, they ordered medicines to be distributed, and the physicians attended with assiduity in every quarter. The city of Rome recalled, in that juncture, an image of ancient manners, when, after a battle bravely fought, the sick and wounded were received with open arms, and relieved by the generosity of their country.*

And let it not be forgotten that it was from the Pagan Greeks we received the word *philanthropy*, which means the love of man, into our modern languages.

Mr. Farrer quotes again many authorities to show that both in Athenian and Roman society there was a constant solicitude for the welfare of the poor:

In the best days of Athens none of her citizens were in want for the necessities of life; for the rich, according to Isocrates, regarding the poverty of their fellow citizens as a disgrace to themselves and the city, helped all who were in need, sending some abroad as traders, letting lands to others to cultivate at fair rents, and enabling others to engage in different occupations. The *Areopagus*, too, checked pauperism by providing public works.†

He also calls attention to the free schools; the exemption of orphans from the State charges; the maintenance at the public expense of the children of citizens killed in war; the daily payment of money from the treasury to the destitute and the wounded,

* *Annals* iv, 62, 63.

† *Areopagiticus* 12, 21, 38.

and the public monthly dinners given by the rich for the benefit of the needy. Under the great Trajan, the like of whom never sat on Jewish or Christian throne, a monthly distribution of food was made to the children of the poor all over Italy, which was paid for by devoting to it a portion of the interest lent by the State to the owners of farms on mortgage. In Rome, there were, in every section of the city, medical officers, paid by the State, who devoted their whole time to the protection of the health of the citizens. One of the laws of Nerva required every one giving a banquet first to make a donation for the poor of his district. The sick and the poor have never failed to provoke sympathy and help in any age or country of the world, and for any one religion to claim all the good in the world as its own exclusive property, is enough to make all brave and honest minds recoil therefrom with horror and sorrow. But people never make such absurd claims except when they are in despair.

The pulpit is constantly lauding what it calls the beatitudes of Jesus, and challenging the world to parallel them if it can. We have accepted the challenge.

When asked how a man might best revenge himself, Diogenes replied: "By becoming himself a good and honest man."* And how much saner is Seneca's advice: "Some one has struck you, withdraw; by striking back you will give both an occasion and an excuse for many blows,"† compared with the "Turn also the other cheek," of Jesus! "What is the best

* *Polyoenus* v, 2.

† *De Ira* ii, 34.

way for a man to hurt his enemy, or to give him the greatest pain?" Epictetus was asked. "By preparing to lead himself the best life he can," was his answer.* But a really European sentiment which perhaps never swelled the breast of any Asiatic teacher was expressed by Seneca, when he wrote: "A great mind that truly respects itself does not revenge an injury, because *it does not feel it.*"† The Sermon on the Mount is a series of dogmatic utterances, without enlightenment or logic. Jesus gives no reasons, nor does he try to prove the truth of his statements, while Seneca's beatitudes are luminous — like a fountain, crystal clear to its depths.

And where will we find finer examples of men who lived up to these teachings than in Pagan annals? Pittacus, one of the seven wise men of Greece, when his enemy had fallen into his hands, instead of avenging himself on him, let him go with this explanation of his conduct: "Forgiveness is better than revenge, for while the former is the sign of a gentle nature, revenge is that of a savage nature."‡ Can his example be matched in the bible? It is true Jesus prayed for his murderers, but did he really mean to forgive them? Then why did he only save the thief on the cross that praised him, while he let the other, who reviled him, go to perdition? And why do not the Sunday-schools, instead of teaching our children of Joseph and Joshua, who caused famine and destruction for their own aggrandizement, recite to our boys and girls the story of Gescon, who, recalled from banishment and exalted

* *Fray* 130.

† *De Ira* iii, 5.

‡ *Epictetus*, *Fray* 68.

to the rank of chief general, instead of punishing his persecutors, allowed them to depart in peace, saying: "I will not return evil for evil, but good for evil."*

It is in the book of man, not in the book of God, that we must look for examples of heroism, love, pity, justice, truth, honor, humanity. In his *History of European Morals*, Mr. Lecky writes: "Amongst the many wise sayings which antiquity ascribed to Pythagoras, few are more remarkable than his division of virtue into two branches — to seek truth, and to do good."† And is there a finer passage, in any of the "divine" books of the many sects, than the creed of the tutor of Alexander the Great — Aristotle:

Cleanse and purify thy heart, for it is the seat of all sin, not by worthless ceremonies, prayers and moanings, but by the stern resolve to sin no more — to uphold right and do right. Sacrifice thyself at the shrine of duty, forgiving injuries, and acting only toward others as you would have them behave towards thyself.‡

Where, again, in Jewish or Christian psalm, or hymnology, is there a finer ideal than this, from Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, rendered in verse by the author of *Paganism and Christianity*:

That pleases me which pleases thee,
Great Universe: I murmur not,
If but the evils of my lot
May serve thy wider harmony.§

Or this from Seneca:

Man's mind, not birth, determines his degree;
No slave so mean but virtue sets him free.
What if his body's bound! His soul can rise
On wings of thought unfettered to the skies.
What if his body's bought! His soul is free;
No servitude can mar its liberty.**

* *Polyoenus* v, 2. † Vol. I, page 54.

‡ *Short Texts on Faith and Philosophies*, Forlong.

§ *Paganism and Christianity*, Farrer, page 94.

** *Ibid.* 96.

And how much purer the motives recommended in the following, compared with the fear of hell and the hope of heaven, so conspicuous in Christian hymns:

Nature made Virtue man's chief aim and goal
 When she made Conscience mistress of his soul,
 His noblest actions taste no sweeter praise
 Than that which conscience to itself conveys;
 Nor on his crimes can punishment be laid
 Worse than inflicts a conscience disobeyed.
 Virtue calls, and, easy of access,
 Spreads smooth the road that leads to happiness;
 Mountains may crumble, Etna fall away,
 True virtue only suffers no decay.*

To find out how radically anti-biblical, or how essentially Pagan are our civil and political institutions, compare the following from the American Constitution with the Asiatic teaching of the Apostle Paul:

The Constitution teaches:
 That all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit; and that they have at all times an undeniable and indefeasible right to alter their form of government in such manner as they may think expedient.

St. Paul teaches:
 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.†

Would it not be more edifying if our preachers or publicists, like Roosevelt and Bryan, instead of lavish praises on an Asiatic book, out of tune with the intellectual and moral ideals of the modern world, recommended to their countrymen the nobler thoughts of the European masters? On a Sunday morning, what church could listen to a better sermon against

* *Paganism and Christianity*, Farrer, page 96.

† Romans xiii, 1, 2.

superstition than is contained in these lines of Plutarch :

Few of the ills we mortals bear
Excel or equal those we fear ;
But worst his lot of all mankind
Whom superstitious terrors bind.
He dreads no storm who stays on shore,
Nor battle who goes not to war ;
But he who thinks of God with dread
Hath terror always overhead,
And draws from land and sea and sky
One long unending agony.

And so, methinks, they wrong God less
Who doubt or disbelief confess
Than they who worse of God believe
Than of a man they could conceive,
And every vice to Him assign
To prove Him fickle, false, malign ;
As I would rather men should say
" There is no Plutarch " than that they
Should speak of Plutarch as so mean,
So full of petty spite and spleen,
That, if you vexed him in the least,
Into your crops he'd turn his beast.*

We often read in the newspapers of some foolish remark by a clergyman in his sermon, as, for instance, that the fearful and murderous wave of heat in the summer is a punishment from God for the sins of this or that city ; or that earthquakes are sent to show the divine displeasure against this or that heresy in the church ; or that God is opposed to aviation because the *air* belongs to the birds, as the sea does to the fishes ; or that Christ is coming soon on a white horse :

" The Son of God is coming on a white horse and the armies of heaven will follow him. Then he will be crowned king of all Israel. The kingdom promised to David will be resurrected," said the Rev. Dr. Ford

* *Paganism and Christianity*, Farrer, pages 98, 99.

C. Ottman, at the Winona Lake convention. The *reverend* speaker had in mind the following exquisite bible text when he was looking for the "white horse":

I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true. . . . And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in *blood*. . . . And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses. . . . And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations. . . . and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Is it possible that the American mind has so deteriorated as to hope for the fulfillment of such a prophecy?

But it is to the credit of the Christian clergy that they do not say more foolish things or oftener than they do — seeing that their entire life is spent in reading and teaching from a book full of fables, gossip, inanities, miracles, and, if I may say so — conundrums. What, for instance, may be expected from men who have to feed on such meaningless and even revolting texts as the following:

I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury.†

The deity making the people drunk to get even with them! We leave the text to the clergy.

Thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, every beast of the field. . . . Come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth. . . . Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.‡

* Revelation xix, 11-15.

† Isaiah lxiii, 6.

‡ Ezekiel xxxix, 17-20.

And again:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men [of war], both free and bond, small and great.*

And what is the sense in the following:

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth.†

A sensible man would leave such a text severely alone; but the clergy try to make the bullock stand for Christ, the horns, for the extremities of the cross, and the "pushing" has reference to the day of judgment, etc.

Dear me! Who would care to spend the red blood in his veins in such an occupation? The beauty of the better bible, composed of such words of Reason as I have culled from only a few of the ancient masters, lies in the fact that there is not a single passage therein to perplex the understanding, pervert the moral sense or cause a blush. It can not be said of the Jewish-Christian bible that it is free from passages which no civilized community would allow in any other than an "inspired" production. And this is enough to condemn the book. The argument that the offensive portions of the Word of God should not be taken separately, but in connection with the better parts of the book, amounts to a plea of guilty. How can the commandment to bear false witness, or to plunder, or

* Revelation xix, 17, 18.

† Deuteronomy xxxiii, 17.

to outrage women, become "divine" by being printed in the same book with the Golden Rule?

Compare, once more, the saying of Jesus, that, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee . . . and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body shall be cast into hell" (*Matthew* v, 29-31); and this other remarkable advice to make "eunuchs of themselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (*Matthew* xix, 12), with the gloriously wholesome thought of Seneca on such absurd religious practices: "One, out of zeal, makes himself an eunuch, another lances his arms; if this be the way to *please* their gods, what should a man do if he had a mind to *anger* them? or, if this be the way to please them, they do certainly deserve not to be worshiped at all . . . the most barbarous and notorious of tyrants . . . never went so far as to command any man to torment himself."*

What would not the clergy have given if the above passage had been in their bible, instead of in the writings of a "heathen"? Jesus recommended self-torture; Seneca says, even tyrants "never went so far as to recommend any man to torment himself." Of course, in his extremity, the Christian will plead for a *spiritual* interpretation of Jesus' sayings: But why use such decidedly materialistic terms, as "plucking out eyes," "cutting off arms," and "making eunuchs of one's self," to convey ideal meanings? Why could not Jesus talk *plainly*, like Seneca?

* Seneca's *Morals* xvii.

In the selection of these few quotations, I have refrained from culling also from the pages of modern writers, lest it be said that since these modern men and women appeared after Christianity, it is to the bible that the world is indebted for their great thoughts and works. Of course, this is not true, seeing how the church persecuted these men and women, and drove them to the stake, or at least, placed the offspring of their brain upon the *Index*, branding their thought as blasphemy. Nevertheless, I have denied myself the pleasure of invoking the galaxy of intellectual leaders, from Bruno and Spinoza, to Goethe and Voltaire, and, Shakespeare and Shelley, and Ibsen and Emerson, who though they had their many faults, were morally as well as mentally, as far above Ezra, Nehemiah, Noah, Solomon, or Peter and Paul, as sense and beauty are above folly and platitude.

We have really paid the Hebrew-Christian scriptures an unmerited compliment in comparing them with the noblest teachings of the Pagan philosophers. Not only is it impossible to find in the bible the high aspirations of the European mind, its independence and fearlessness of the gods, so eloquently expressed in Seneca's prayer: "O Neptune, your ocean is big, and my bark is frail. You may save me if you will; you may sink me if you will, but whatever happen, I shall keep my rudder true," but even when we compare the contents of the bible with the teachings and practices of the most primitive peoples in the world the result is far from being favorable to the "inspired" volume.

Was Molock, for instance, who devoured children, as destructive as Jehovah who consumed whole nations

by fire and the sword? Was Baal or Astaroth as sanguinary as the being who slaughtered in one night all the first-born of Egypt? Did the idols of savages ever think even of drowning a world? Is it possible to find in the dictionary of the gods, one who can compare with the inventor of the Christian hell? When the missionaries entered Borneo to convert the natives, the Rajah drove them out of the land, "because the Christian God used people as firewood after death."

In conclusion, before Mr. Bryan and his colleagues may ask us to produce a better bible, let them find in the Jewish-Christian scriptures a text or a passage which will describe a more enviable state of society in any Jewish or Christian country, of the past or the present, than the picture presented by the unrivaled Pericles in his Athenian oration, beginning with the words:

"We are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ not for talk and ostentation, but when there is real use for it. We regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs not as a harmless but as a useless character."

Conclusion

The Book of God and the Book of Man

THE former is a *miracle*. The latter is the actual story of man on earth, and his achievements. God finished his book long ago. Man is still writing. There is between these two books the same difference that there is between the rock and the vine. The rock does not grow, neither can it move. Sun and shower fall upon it in vain. The vine, on the other hand, responds to the caress of the life-forces. It swings with the wind, and reaches up with every growing thing, for the sunshine.

The book of God is arrested, like the rock.

The book of Man is alive and increasing, like the vine.

THE END.

There appears to be need of some bold man who specially honors plainness of speech, and will say what is best for the city and citizens, ordaining what is good for the whole state, amid the corruptions of human souls, opposing the mightiest lusts, and having no man his helper but himself, standing alone and following reason only.—Plato.

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